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The Hans Niemann–Magnus Carlsen Withdrawal Scandal

CHEATING IN CHESS

THE CAN OF WORMS OPENS

GRANDMASTER RAY KEENE ON MEETING QUEEN ELIZABETH II AND CHESS AMONG ENGLISH ROYALS

A QUEEN FIT FOR CHESS

IMPRESSUM

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The death of a Queen and the birth of a scandal

As we started to plan this issue of BCM, the news broke of the passing of Queen Elisabeth II. Described as 'a constant in an ever-changing world', the Queen was the last living witness of the greatest moments and people who marked the second part of the 20th century and the first two decades of the 21st. The nation went into mourning and the world lost one of its most recognisable figures.

Still, the Queen's life and legacy impacted many in our nation and around the world, and chess players are surely among them. British players - such as Harry Golombek, Jonathan Penrose, David Anderton, Ray Keene, Nigel Short to name but a few - received awards from the Queen for their contributions to chess. A poll conducted by YouGov has found that 44% of Britons cried or became teary/welled up when they heard the news of the Queen's passing. A 2018 poll by the same company found that almost a third of the country have seen or met the Queen in real life. One of those who has met the Queen in real life, on more than one occasion, is Grandmaster Ray Keene. In this issue of BCM Ray Keene shares his memories about this.

And while most of the world was overwhelmed with the coverage of the Queen's funeral, the chess world has been shaken by a scandal about cheating. Even the leading global media - which sadly don't give much space to chess nowadays - have reported on the spat between Magnus Carlsen and Hans Nieman. BCM's Aleksandar Colovic looks into this particular allegation and the wider issue of cheating in chess.

Here we would just like to highlight one commonsense principle which should in our view also apply to the chess world. Before a serious allegation is made, there should be some credible evidence that the allegation is in fact justified, and any such evidence should be produced in order that the allegation can be verified or disproved and responded to. It is precisely in order to deter and punish unmerited and damaging allegations that the laws of defamation have been developed.
Magnus Carlsen's statement released on 26 September 2022 on Twitter concerning Hans Niemann does not seem to us here at **BCM** to constitute actual evidence that Niemann has cheated in over-the-board play, notwithstanding Niemann's admission that he has cheated in the past when playing on-line chess. Rather, Carlsen appears to be raising the important general topic of cheating in chess, which we would applaud, but has done so in a specific way which might suggest that Niemann has cheated to an extent beyond his own admissions.

We have some sympathy for both Carlsen and Niemann however. On the one hand, Carlsen is clearly motivated by a desire to 'clean up' this aspect of the chess world, and no doubt has had to decide whether to remain silent about this important problem because either it is simply not possible for him to produce hard evidence or he does not wish (for whatever reasons) to produce such evidence. On the other hand, from Niemann's perspective, how is it possible for him to defend himself against rather generalised allegations which go beyond his own admissions of cheating if there is no specificity to or evidence of those allegations?

However, all that may be, we suspect that lawyers might at some point become involved. We do not go so far as to share Shakespeare's apparent wish to 'kill all the lawyers', but the following more balanced quote from Shakespeare's Timon of Athens does come to mind:

'*A friend of mine, who, in hot blood,*
Hath stepp'd into the law, which is past depth
To those that, without heed, do plunge into 't.'

Milan Dinic
Stephen Lowe
Shaun Taulbut

A QUEEN FIT FOR CHESS

Grandmaster Ray Keene
on meeting Queen Elizabeth II
and chess among English royals

Photo source: www.royal.uk

This month I look back in gratitude to the life, Jubilee and indelible influence of Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

I personally encountered her on four occasions, the first being my arrival at Trinity College, Cambridge, which coincided exactly with her chaperoning of the then HRH Prince Charles to the same venerable institution. Two other meetings occurred at Buckingham Palace Garden parties, but the fourth and most memorable took place, also at Buckingham Palace, in 1985, when Her Majesty in person made me an OBE, Officer of the British Empire, for my services to chess.

In advance of being introduced into The August Presence, I carried out rigorous homework with a previous recipient of the OBE, the venerable Grandmaster Emeritus, Harry Golombek. Harry explained that the monarch was unusually well informed and engaged him in vigorous conversation about his elevation to the minor nobility.

Queen Elizabeth II and OBE: 'Why am I giving you this?'

Come the day of my inauguration I acquired a brand new smart blue suit for the ceremony, ordered a taxi in good time and fastened the buttons on my suit. Sadly, just as we drove through the Palace gates I inadvertently breathed, the middle button on my suit detached itself vigorously, performed a neat aerial parabola, and vanished without trace.

I addressed the problem of the missing button by adopting a fixed Napoleonic pose, whereby my right hand remained firmly placed over the place where the missing button should have been.

When my turn came for HM to pin the OBE on my chest, she said: ***why am I giving you this?*** Having expected some deep conversation about my chess career (as predicted by Harry Golombek) I had lined up various pithy and precise answers in advance. Taken aback by the directness of the question I replied, somewhat feebly, Chess, Ma'am, to which she retorted, ***Oh, do you play?***

Here was my opportunity to respond, yes Ma'am, I am a Grandmaster, I have written over 100 books on chess, I am a former British champion and have won gold medals in European championships. Instead, even more feebly, I said: yes, a bit, and my audience was over.

The Queen can also move diagonally!

My favourite chess anecdote concerning Her Majesty came during the visit to Windsor Castle by US President Donald Trump. While reviewing the Guard of Honour the President unwittingly stepped in front of the Queen, who regained the initiative by sliding past him, back to the front. The universal caption was, President forgets that the Queen can also move diagonally!

The Queen in chess

I now turn my attention to the Queen in chess and her antecedents. When the original version of Muslim chess, Shatranj, underwent its Renaissance transformation, around 1475, the main change was in the powers of the Queen. Formerly known as the Vizier, or Prime Minister, the new Queen advanced from being a waddling cripple, permitted only a one-square diagonal move in each direction, to the most powerful unit on the board, capable even of delivering checkmate in just two moves. Admittedly this was only possible against dismally weak opening play by White, namely 1.f4 e6 2.g4 ♕h4 checkmate. Nevertheless, when compared with the old- style chess, where any form of initial contact took around ten moves, this rapid dénouement astounded and impressed the chess enthusiasts of the day.

It has variously been speculated that the new powers of the Queen owed something

to the example of powerful late 16th-century female rulers, such as Queen Elizabeth I of England, Marie de Medici in France, or Margaret of Parma, Vice-Regent of the Spanish Netherlands on behalf of her brother, Philip II. Sadly, this attractively romantic fable does not hold up, since the dates do not fit. The new chess was well established long before the times of these celebrated female potentates.

Far more likely is it that the new Queen represented the introduction of distance weapons on the battlefield, such as the great cannon of the Hungarian engineer Urban, famously used by Sultan Mehmet the Victorious to demolish the ramparts of Constantinople in 1453. If chess is a game representing real warfare, then such a game, lacking a piece possessed of long-distance firepower, would have seemed hopelessly outdated. Hence the need for a piece with the vast powers conferred on the new style of Queen.

Traditionally, historical opinion has located the origins of chess in Northern India around the year AD 600. H.J.R.Murray's monumental survey of the sources (*A History of Chess*, Oxford University Press, 1913) argues that the manuscript references dating from the early 7th century refer to chess as *chaturanga*, a term meaning 'divided into four', which was also, as Murray pointed out, the 'regular epic name for the army at an early date in Sanskrit'. The fourfold division of the Indian army into elephants, chariots, cavalry and infantry can be dated as early as the fourth century BC, according to Murray. In his social history, *Chess: The History of a Game*, Richard Eales, while endorsing Murray's basic premise on the origins of chess, also emphasises the fact that before AD 800 'documentary evidence shrinks to a few ambiguous fragments'.

What is certain is that from India the game swept outwards to both East and West. By AD 800 the Chinese version, in which a central river divides the two forces, was

already in existence. Through Korea the game reached Japan, where it is still played under the guise of Shogi, where captured pieces, like mercenaries, change sides. In the West the game travelled through Persia to the Arabic world. The earliest European references indicate that chess was known in western and central Europe by the beginning of the 11th century.

In this initial phase, it was during the caliphate of Baghdad and the Abbasid dynasty that the game truly flourished. The city of Baghdad, founded in AD 762 by the Abbasid Caliph al-Mansur, was once the world capital of chess. In the ninth and tenth centuries AD Baghdad was to *Shatranj* (the old Arabic form of chess) what Moscow used to be to the modern game. Baghdad was the epicentre of the Muslim Golden Age of science and wisdom, a cultured flourishing metropolis, packed with grandmasters and chess theoreticians who had produced volume after volume of critical positions and opening theory. Is it possible that a colony of grandmasters could have arisen in isolation without a

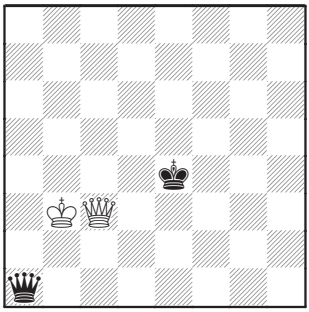
widespread and lengthy tradition of chess playing, perhaps in rural areas, a kind of epic, local but widespread chess tradition? However, surely the sophistication of chess knowledge displayed in Baghdad indicates that the ancestry of chess is, in fact, considerably more ancient than the earliest Indian references of the seventh century. The question arises especially since grandmasters were prevalent in Baghdad not long after the foundation of the city.

The most renowned grandmaster in Baghdad was as-Suli (c.AD 880-946). Just like the recent world chess champion, Garry Kasparov, he came from an area bordering the Caspian Sea and also, like Kasparov, he travelled from a far-flung outpost of empire to seek his fortune in a capital city. In Baghdad, as-Suli became the chess favourite of caliph al-Muktafi. In AD 940 as-Suli made an indiscreet comment and had to flee Baghdad. He later died in poverty in Basra.

The following study demonstrates as-Suli's remarkable genius. The position occurs in a chess manuscript written in AD 1140, which was found in a library in Constantinople (now Istanbul). Tragically, much of the wealth of chess lore accumulated in Baghdad itself would have been destroyed when Genghis Khan's grandson, Hulagu, annihilated that mighty centre of learning and civilisation in 1258 AD.

It is a puzzle cited by as-Suli, who said of it 'this is very old, yet neither al-Adli (a previous chess genius) nor anyone else has said whether it is drawn or can be won. Nor has any one interpreted it … because of its difficulty. There is no one on earth who has solved it unless he was taught it by me.'

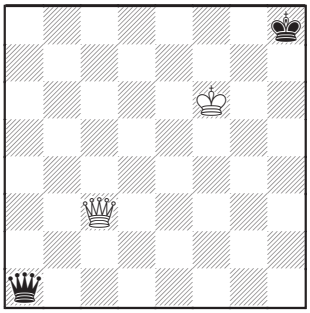
As-Suli did not supply a solution and in a sense this was a challenge to the world, as with Fermat's Last Theorem, which no one had succeeded in cracking for a millennium. The variations that I now demonstrate were reconstructed by Grandmaster Yuri Averbakh and, bar a few later computer finesses, constitute the only satisfactory solution to the as-Suli Two Queens puzzle. Remember that in the ancient version of chess, the queens, unlike Her Majesty outflanking Donald Trump, could only move **one** square diagonally in any direction, and capturing your opponent's last piece counted as victory, even if an actual checkmate was no longer possible.



If it is White's move in this position he wins very quickly, as follows: 1.♔a2 ♔d3 (Black's defence is always a counter-attack against the white queen whenever the white king sets off to hunt down the black queen) 2.♕b4 ♔c4 3.♕a3 and White wins, since Black's queen is cornered, while White's queen is immune. However, in the diagram, it is Black's move, and it is this factor which causes the extreme difficulty of the solution.

1…♔d5 (if 1… ♔d3 then 2.♕b4 and 3.♔a2 will win. If Black plays any other move at the start then 2.♔a2 wins at once) 2.♔b4 ♔d6 3.♔c4 (not 3.♕d2 ♔e5 4.♔c3 ♔e4 5. ♔c2 ♔f3 6.♔b1 ♔e2 7.♕c1 ♔d1) 3… ♔e6 (plausible, but incorrect would be 3…♔e5 4.♕b4 ♔d6 5.♔c3 ♔c6 6.♔b3 ♔b5 7.♕c3 ♔e5 8.♔c2 ♔c4 9.♕d2 and White wins since he will quickly trap the black queen with his own king, while the black king cannot make contact with the white queen) 4.♔d4 (if 4.♕b4 Black defends with 4…♔d7!! 5.♔b3 ♔c6 6.♔a2 ♔b5 or if 6.♔c3 ♔d6 also with a draw. Black is defending by using the method

of corresponding squares, generally regarded as a modern invention. The point is, for example, that if White's king is on b3 Black's should be on c6, or if White's king is on c3, Black's should be on d6) 4…♔f6 5.♔d5 ♔f7 6.♔e5 ♔g7 7.♔e6 ♔g8 8.♔f6 ♔h8.



The black king has been forced to h8, the furthest extremity of the board. By playing 9.♔g6 White wins the battle for the corresponding squares. For Black, the chessboard has become too small. The square that corresponds to g6 is i9, but it does not exist on the chessboard.

9.♔g6 ♔g8 10.♕d2 ♔f8 (if Black plays 10…♕b2 to free his queen from its prison on a1 then the white queen on d2 is well out of range of the black king on f8) 11.♕c1 ♔e7 12.♔f5 ♔d6 13.♔e4 ♔c5 14.♔d3 ♔b4: the black queen is lost.

The solution to this endgame study is amazing. Both kings run from one corner to the other and then back again. It is a creation of genius. Is there any modern endgame study which contains such an advanced idea?

The appalling complexity and filigree subtlety of this wonderful endgame which as-Suli solved in the early tenth century make it difficult for me to believe that the game of chess was invented as late as AD 600. As-Suli himself calls this a very old problem and mentions that al-Adli, who died some 30-40 years before as-Suli's birth, was already aware of it, yet unable to solve it. Could such sophistication in a game, given the limitation of civilised life at that time, especially the lack of printing, have arisen so quickly?

Our knowledge about the origins of chess is limited, as Eales emphasised, by the lack of documentary evidence. We therefore appeal to Arabic and other scholars to search archives across the world - for example In Cairo, where there may be much untapped original material - for manuscript sources which can illuminate the dark age of the early history of chess.

Modern chess, in fact, must have received a tremendous boost from the sheer absence of competing information about Shatranj, a direct result of Hulagu ' s Armageddon in Baghdad.

King Charles and chess

And what of our new king, Charles III? We know that his ill-fated ancestor Charles I owned a richly-designed amber board, but there is scant evidence of him actually playing chess. Both Elizabeth I and Mary Queen of Scots are on record as having taken an interest in the game.

Personally, I had rather more contact with the current King than with his mother, since I shared a landing with him at Trinity College, Cambridge in Great Court during our communal third year. We tended to meet on the staircase each morning after using our shared bathroom, but I was never invited across the corridor to test the Royal prowess at the Royal Game.

However, as Nigel Short MBE never tires of reminding me, I did once nick a regal sausage roll from a tray outside his room, and very tasty it was. When I came back for seconds a burly security man was standing guard. Nigel thinks I should have been sent to the Tower for lèse-Majesté, but I think transportation to the Antipodes would have been more equitable!

English monarchs, Shakespeare and chess

Among English monarchs, King Henry VIII possessed a chessboard plus pieces and it can doubtless be assumed that Henry regarded chess as a natural accomplishment of a renaissance prince, along with writing poetry and jousting.

Shakespeare's play *Henry VIII* brings to a close the mighty history cycle commencing with *Edward III*, now generally regarded as at least partly a Shakespeare original, and one of the very few which specifically mentions chess: 'And bid the lords hold on their play at chess, For we will walk and meditate alone.' Scene three in the Royal Shakespeare Company edition.

The cycle continues with *Richard II*, *Henry IV* Parts One and Two, *Henry V*, *Henry VI* Parts One, Two and Three, and *Richard III*. It is my opinion that this huge dramatic cycle, essentially one long play, represents the true English national epic in a way that *Beowulf* (too early in our national lifeline) and *Paradise Lost* (too Latinate for most readers, though a treat for those who like their English poetry in a Latin word order) do not.

If I am correct, then the Shakespeare Royal histories together create our epic poem of national identity, on a par with Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, the Welsh *Mabinogion*, Finland's *Kalevala*, Portugal's *Lusiads* and, for the Jewish people, the epic story of the Hebrew Bible, or Old Testament.

If you are looking for kings, queens, castles, knights and bishops in abundance, then Shakespeare's Royal histories are the place to go.

Queen Elizabeth I was a distant descendant of Edward the Black Prince (so named after his black armour), whose great grandfather, King Edward I, is actually depicted playing chess in the board games manuscript of the Castilian King Alfonso the Wise (Alfonso el Sabio). Should anyone doubt that *Edward III* is a true Shakespeare creation, consider these ringingly metaphorical lines from King Edward's son, Edward the Black Prince, great, great, great, great, great uncle of Elizabeth I, hurling defiance at the French (standing in for the Spanish from the Armada of Shakespeare's day):

"*Defiance, Frenchman? We rebound it back,*
Even to the bottom of thy master's throat;
And be it spoke with reverence of the King
My gracious father and these other lords,
I hold thy message but as scurrilous,
And him that sent thee like the lazy drone
Crept up by stealth unto the eagle's nest,
From whence we'll shake him with so rough a storm
As others shall be warnèd by his harm."

Nine plays later, Shakespeare predicts the reigns of Elizabeth I and her successor James 1st and 6th as follows:

Henry VIII Act V, Scene 5:

"*In her days every man shall eat in safety,*
Under his own vine, what he plants; and sing
The merry songs of peace to all his neighbours:
God shall be truly known; and those about her

From her shall read the perfect ways of honour,

And by those claim their greatness, not by blood.

Nor shall this peace sleep with her: but as when

The bird of wonder dies, the maiden phoenix,

Her ashes new create another heir,

As great in admiration as herself;

So shall she leave her blessedness to one,

When heaven shall call her from this cloud of darkness,

Who from the sacred ashes of her honour

Shall star-like rise, as great in fame as she was,

And so stand fix'd: peace, plenty, love, truth, terror,

That were the servants to this chosen infant,

Shall then be his, and like a vine grow to him:

Wherever the bright sun of heaven shall shine,

His honour and the greatness of his name

Shall be, and make new nations: he shall flourish,

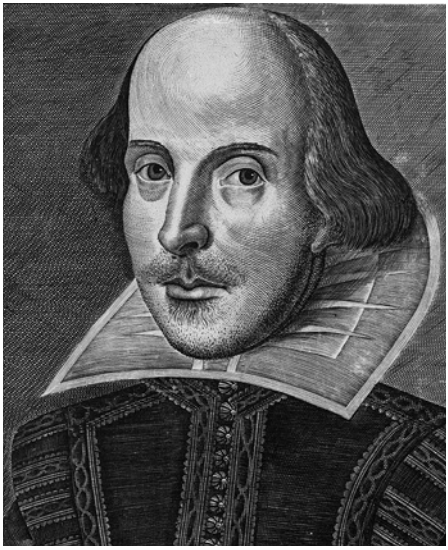
And, like a mountain cedar, reach his branches

To all the plains about him: our children's children

Shall see this, and bless heaven."

Even Shakespeare was not averse to buttering up the Tudor and Stuart monarchs. In the film version of *101 Dalmatians*, the question posed by her butler Frederick (played by Hugh Fraser) to Cruella de Vil springs to mind: 'What type of sycophant would you like me to be?' Not to mention Virgil's ekphrastic panegyric of Octavian at the Battle of Actium: 'His happy brow shoots out twin flames, and from his forehead, blazes forth the star of his father.'

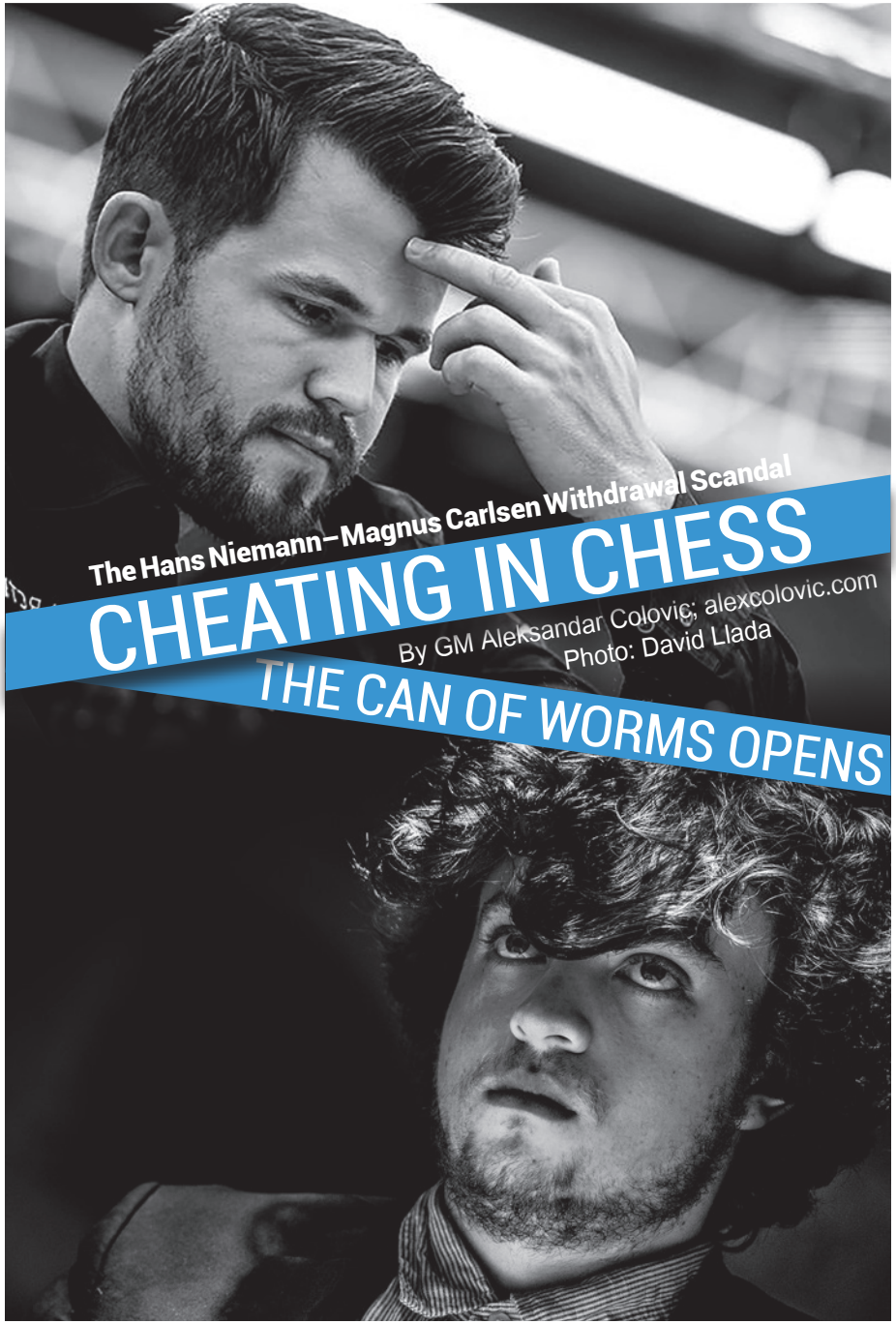
The defeat of the Armada is a highly significant moment in English history and Anne Boleyn with her daughter Elizabeth are key parts of that national mythology. The



supreme emotion of the episode is captured in the poem "Drake's Drum" by Sir Henry Newbolt: 'Take my drum to England, hang et by the shore, Strike it when your powder's runnin' low; If the Dons sight Devon, I'll quit the port o' Heaven, An' drum them up the Channel as we drumm'd them long ago.' The Dons are the Spanish, of course, not members of the Corleone family.

At this time of national mourning for the loss of Elizabeth the Great it is reassuring to know that there has been a chess connection with our royal family and that our greatest national poet also linked chess and royalty in what I consider to be the true English national epic, our Iliad, our Odyssey, our Aeneid.

I conclude with a modest proposal: the once empty fourth plinth in Trafalgar Square has been defaced with a variety of substandard confections for the past few years, including the current abortion, a giant decaying ice cream cone with a huge fly crawling on it. Surely it is time for Liz Truss and King Charles III, my old roommate from Trinity, to combine forces, step in and commission an equestrian statue of Elizabeth the Great as the permanent adornment of that much-abused fourth plinth.



The Hans Niemann–Magnus Carlsen Withdrawal Scandal

CHEATING IN CHESS

THE CAN OF WORMS OPENS

By GM Aleksandar Colovic, alexcolovic.com
Photo: David Llada

The chess world was shaken with a major controversy at the latest Sinquefield Cup in Saint Louis

The World Champion left the event after his third-round loss (ending his 53-game winning streak) to the 19-year-old American Hans Niemann. Cheating was allegedly the issue. Then, just a few days after this, in an online game in the Julius Baer Generation Cup, Carlsen resigned against Hans Niemann after making only one move and switched his camera off, reigniting the controversy.

The scandal has sent the chess world into turmoil and has brought chess to the media, but for all the wrong reasons.

What happened?

You can see the game from St Louis analysed elsewhere in this issue, but the fact is that World Champion Magnus Carlsen simply announced he had withdrawn from the tournament via a Twitter message. This was the first time in his career he has done such a thing. To add an additional twist, he linked a short clip of Jose Mourinho where the famous coach says *'If I speak I am in big trouble. Big, big trouble'*. Carlsen offered no further explanation, remaining silent for over three weeks; this led to speculations and allegations which were already shaking the chess world even as the tournament in St Louis had finished.

The start of the storm:

Magnus Carlsen
@MagnusCarlsen
I've withdrawn from the tournament. I've always enjoyed playing in the @STLChessClub, and hope to be back in the future
youtube.com
If I speak I am in big trouble-Mourinho
Twitter-https://twitter.com/LFCBenji10

FIDE Director General, GM Emil Sutovsky seemed to have sided with Carlsen:

Emilchess
@EmilSutovsky
No matter how his tournaments went, @MagnusCarlsen never quit. He must have had a compelling reason, or at least he believes he has it. Don't call him a sore loser or disrespectful. I shall not speculate on the reasons of his withdrawal, but probably would expect TD to air them.

Why did it happen?

Magnus Carlsen was initially silent about the whole controversy, but the rest of the world was anything but. The first to comment publicly and directly was American Grandmaster and No1 chess streamer Hikaru Nakamura. On his stream channel Nakamura openly said the reason for Carlsen's withdrawal was that Niemann was a cheat. He also mentioned that chess.com had banned Niemann twice in the past after discovering he had been cheating when playing on their platform.

The winner of the Candidates, Ian Nepomniachtchi, insinuated that Niemann's win over Carlsen was 'too impressive'.

From online cheating, the issue quickly moved to suspicions of over-the-board cheating. With no hard evidence to support the allegations, all that was left were the opinions of almost all the experts in the chess world.

What happened next?

The 19-year-old Hans Niemann gave an agitated and emotional response to the situation and allegations in one of the post-game interviews. He admitted to cheating online but downplayed it by saying it was when he was 12 and 16 years old and that he cheated in 'casual' games that were still rated on chess.com. His explanation was that he wanted to get a higher rating so that he could play stronger opponents. He reiterated that he had never cheated in over-the-board chess.

Following the incident, the organisers in St Louis introduced a delay of the live transmission and harsher anti-cheating controls before the rounds. During the tournament, chess.com banned Hans Niemann for a third time and shared evidence and information with him that contradicted his statements about the amount and seriousness of his cheating on the platform.

The Chief Arbiter of the event, Chris Bird, the organisers and Professor Kenneth Regan (the inventor of the most precise cheating-detection algorithm) all clearly stated that they found no evidence of cheating at the event in St Louis.

Two of the most widely known cheating accusations in history

Two of the most widely known cheating accusations in history involved Bulgarian GM and former World Champion Veselin Topalov. In 2005, at the World Championship tournament in St Luis, Topalov was rumoured to have received signalling from his manager, Danailov, who was sitting in the audience. He started the event with 6.5 out of 7 and won it convincingly, thus becoming a World Champion.

A year later, at the World Championship match in Elista, it was Topalov and his team that accused Vladimir Kramnik of using external help. They noticed Kramnik's suspicious behaviour of visiting the toilet too often, claiming over 50 visits per game, with electronic cables also being discovered in the ceiling of the toilets. The notorious Toiletgate smeared the image of chess and eventually didn't help Topalov, who lost the match on tie-breaks.

When it seemed it couldn't get any worse

Chess also became top news in the tabloids, citing claims that the 19-year-old Grandmaster used sex toys to help him win. The rumours were further heightened when Elon Musk quoted a tweet to his 105 million followers citing the above claims. Musk later deleted the tweet.

Then, an adult webcam site offered one million dollars to Hans Niemann to broadcast himself playing a live game of chess completely naked.

It's very sad that chess gets attention only when something ridiculous like this makes its way to the media, which then the said media uses to mock our noble game.

A rush to conclusions

The whole world was quick to give their opinion. Some people undertook computer analyses of Niemann's over-the-board events and found them suspicious, others, based on the same analysis, found them clean. Some even went as far as to note a significant difference in Niemann's performance when playing on live boards and when playing on boards without live transmission.

Coach GM Jacob Aagaard wrote an essay where he gave insights from his training with Niemann and clearly stated that he believed the 19-year-old American was innocent.

Garry Kasparov demanded a public statement by the World Champion as part of his public responsibility;

'World chess champion Magnus Carlsen withdrew from the world's premier tournament in St. Louis, an act with no precedent in the past 50 years, and his explanation is required' said Kasparov and added:

'Carlsen's withdrawal was a blow to chess fans, his colleagues at the tournament, the organisers, and, as the rumours and negative publicity swirl in a vacuum, to the game. The world title has its responsibilities, and a public statement is the least of them here'.

Players from the tournament were cautious in their statements, except for Nepomniatchi's above-mentioned insinuation. In a later interview Nepomniachtchi 'corrected course' and said that he hoped Niemann 'will prove himself innocent'.

The former World Champion Garry Kasparov requested that Magnus Carlsen makes a statement and clarifies his views on the issue

FIDE statement on the Carlsen - Niemann polemic (23/09/2022)

Last week, World Champion Magnus Carlsen resigned in a game played in an online competition against GM Hans Niemann before making his move two. The week before, he left an over-the-board tournament after losing the game to the same Mr. Niemann.

These were not FIDE events; however, as the world's chess governing body, it is our duty to protect the integrity of the game and its image, and in view that the incident keeps escalating, we find it necessary to take a step forward.

First of all, we strongly believe that the World Champion has a moral responsibility attached to his status, since he is viewed as a global ambassador of the game. His actions impact the reputation of his colleagues, sportive results, and eventually can be damaging to our game. We strongly believe that there were better ways to handle this situation.

At the same time, we share his deep concerns about the damage that cheating brings to chess. FIDE has led the fight against cheating for many years, and we reiterate our zero-tolerance policy toward cheating in any form. Whether it is online or "over the board", cheating remains cheating. We are strongly committed to this fight, and we have invested in forming a group of specialists to devise sophisticated preventive measures that already apply at top FIDE events.

As we have already done before, FIDE calls for reinforcing the cooperation between major online platforms, private events and top players - most of whom have already expressed their will to join efforts with FIDE.

FIDE is prepared to task its Fair Play commission with a thorough investigation of the incident, when the adequate initial proof is provided, and all parties involved disclose the information at their disposal. We are fully aware that, in some cases, uncertainty can harm players' performance. It also can be damaging to a player's reputation - that's why we insist on the anti-cheating protocols to be followed.

It is our hope that this whole situation could have a long-term positive effect, if tackled properly. We propose to launch a dedicated Panel, that would include representatives of the leading chess platforms, Grandmasters, anti-cheating experts and FIDE officers, in order to fight this risk and prevent it becomes a real plague.

Arkady Dvorkovich
FIDE President

FIDE launches investigaiton into the scandal

FIDE has confirmed they will launch an investigation into Magnus Carlsen and Hans Niemann after the cheating scandal

Following the recent developments in the Carlsen-Niemann controversy, FIDE's Fair Play Commission (FPL) has decided to act ex-officio and create an Investigatory Panel (IP). Three members of the Commission will form this panel, and it will also have the possibility to call for a consultation with external experts wherever analysis is required.

The focus of the investigation would be twofold: checking the World Champion's claims of alleged cheating by Niemann and Niemann's self-statement regarding online cheating.

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave defended Niemann: 'It has basically become a witch-hunt and the effect it can have on Hans is actually quite devastating' and 'honestly I don't know [if Hans has cheated]' but 'based on the information I have now I would say he is not cheating'

Photo: Lennart Ootes / St Louis CC Official

And after three weeks of silence Carlsen finally spoke out...

The world champion published a statement directly accusing 19-year-old American Grandmaster of cheating.

In a statement posted to his social media accounts, Carlsen noted Niemann's unusual rapid rise in the chess ranks and his surprisingly relaxed behaviour when they played in St Louis.

'I believe that Niemann has cheated more—and more recently—than he has publicly admitted. His over- the board progress has been unusual, and throughout our game in the Sinquefield Cup I had the impression that he wasn't tense or even fully concentrating on the game in critical positions, while outplaying as black in a way I think only a handful of players can do.'

Carlsen went on to say that 'We must do something about cheating, and for my part, I don't want to play against people that have cheated repeatedly in the past, because I don't know what they are capable of doing in the future'.

However, instead of providing direct evidence or saying he would provide it to FIDE/ the organisers at St Louis, Carlsen concluded with another puzzling comment: 'There is more that I would like to say. Unfortunately, at this time I am limited in what I can say without explicit permission from Niemann to speak openly. So far I have only been able to speak with my actions, and those actions have stated clearly that I am not willing to play chess with Niemann. I hope that the truth on this matter comes out, whatever it may be.'

What does Carlsen's letter tell us? Not much, really...

Following hints, the World Champion went on record to directly accuse Niemann of cheating. However, he didn't provide any direct evidence as to how exactly Niemann cheated, and for many that is the main issue - especially following the fact that the organisers at St Louis came out and said they found no evidence of foul play!

Levon Aronian had this to say: 'When young players play very well there are all this accusations towards them. I mean all of my colleagues are pretty much paranoid and quite often I was the one telling them 'come on guys.'

Carlsen's claim that he is 'limited in what I can say without explicit permission from Niemann to speak openly' just posed more questions and helped stir even more speculations.

Carlsen's claim that he needs 'explicit permission from Niemann' is a hot potato thrown to the 19-year-old Grandmaster who is again on the backfoot, defending against a claim where there is no substantial evidence presented, but a verdict has almost already been made.

If one thing is clear it is that organisers will be highly unlikely or extremely hesitant to invite Niemann to future events, and, in the case of tournaments where Carlsen will be taking part, the choice is quite obvious. This effectively means an end to Niemann's career. If he is a cheat, that's how it should be. However, for such an ostracising verdict which will profoundly impact the life of a young chess player, concrete and unquestionable evidence needs to be presented.

At the time of writing this article, Niemann has not given his response.

What do the rules say about cheating?

Here are a few relevant excerpts of the FIDE Anti-Cheating Regulations, which can be found on the FIDE website (https://fpl.fide.com/regulations/):

III.B.3. Oral or informal complaints are not accepted.

IV.9. The standard of proof shall be whether cheating has been established to occur to comfortable satisfaction. This standard of proof is greater than a balance of probabilities, but less than proof beyond reasonable doubt.

V.3. When the ACC (now Fair Play Commission) determined that manifestly unfounded accusation was made to a third party or in public, the offender can be sanctioned by suspension up to three months for first violation, up to six months suspension for further violations.

V.4. In particularly severe cases of unfounded accusations, the ACC will forward the case to ETH and recommend longer suspensions and other sanctions.

***

To give you an idea how this looks in practice, the procedure is as follows: the complainant files an official complaint containing all the important information to FPL (FIDE's Fair Play Commission). If FPL initiates further investigation an Investigatory Panel (IP) is formed. The IP investigates the case and unless it decides to dismiss it, prepares a report that is then sent to EDC (FIDE's Ethics and Disciplinary Commission). Based on this report EDC decides about possible sanctions on the accused person.

A can of worms

Because of this scandal chess again entered the limelight, but again for all the wrong reasons. The implications of (finally) talking openly about cheating at the highest levels cannot be overstated. However, there is one thing that is clear: without evidence, this is nothing but a witch-hunt with huge reputational damage for both the accuser and the accused.

To end with a couple of observations from my side.

I think that Carlsen's first decision was shrewd - he didn't say anything, but kept baited the whole world waiting for him to say what he meant. He thus remained safe from possible accusations, but he made the point more than clear.

I was quite surprised by that Jose Mourinho clip. Why should the World Champion, of all people, be afraid to speak openly on any matter? What trouble can he possibly get into? Or does this mean that he knows something, but he cannot prove it?

His statement was more direct than what I expected. He must have consulted his legal department to make sure that he cannot be sued for defamation, yet the accusation is not clear while there is no evidence provided.

A confusing point is the claim that Carlsen needs Niemann's 'explicit permission' to speak openly? It's like the victim asking the alleged felon for permission to say what really happened?!

As the regulations above state, accusing somebody just because they played well is a clear case of a manifestly unfounded accusation. Unless Carlsen comes up with solid evidence fast, then he could be sanctioned by the Ethics and Disciplinary Commission.

The can of worms has been opened: cheating in élite chess is now a topic that is further complicated by the (near) impossibility of proving anything. Strong grandmasters are fully capable themselves of coming up with the moves of the engine, they just cannot do it on a regular basis, game after game. Therefore, they would only need a hint once or twice per game to become invincible, so, unless there is solid, physical evidence, the quality of the moves can never be used as proof of cheating.

This will give rise to poisonous speculations and will create a toxic environment (as if chess doesn't have enough of that already) that will be harmful for everybody. The future for chess doesn't look so bright right now.

THE SINQUEFIELD CUP 2022

A strange tournament

The ninth edition of the Sinquefield Cup will be remembered not for the chess, but rather for the scandal that was picked up by everybody, even media outside of the chess world

By GM Aleksandar Colovic; www.alexcolovic.com

Photo:
Lennart Ootes
GCT / St Louis CC Official

The ninth Sinquefield Cup took place from 2-13 September. It turned out to be the strangest of them all (so far).

There were two main stories in the tournament. The first one happened early, in round three, when the rating outsider Hans Niemann beat World Champion Carlsen with the black pieces. To put this in perspective, this was Carlsen's first loss with White in two years.

Magnus Carlsen – Hans Niemann

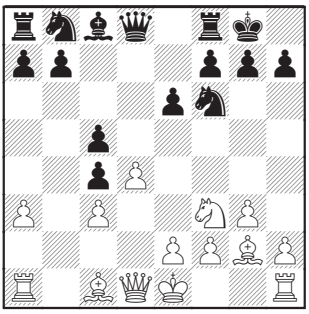
9th Sinquefield Cup 2022 Saint Louis USA (3.1)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.g3 Carlsen has played many things against the Nimzo-Indian, but never this one. However, as Niemann correctly pointed out in one of his interviews, this can easily lead to Catalan-type positions and the Catalan has been one of Carlsen's favourite openings after the match with Nepomniachtchi.

4...0-0 5.♗g2 d5 The move 5...c5 leads to different types of positions.

6.a3 The alternative is 6.♘f3.

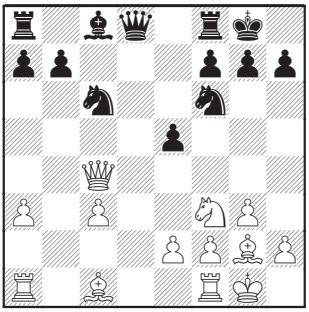
6...♗xc3+ 7.bxc3 dxc4 8.♘f3 c5



White sacrificed a pawn, but obtained the pair of bishops in a typical Catalan style. Black now wants to finish development (primarily of the bishop on c8) and doesn't mind returning the pawn if he manages to do so.

9.0-0 cxd4 10.♕xd4 10.♘xd4 e5 will allow Black to develop the light-squared bishop comfortably.

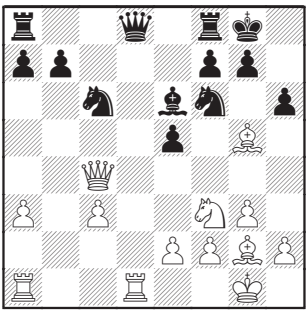
10...♘c6 11.♕xc4 e5



Black manages to push ...e5 and this means that he has solved his opening problems. It's curious that Carlsen with White ended up in a prospectless position after a mere 12 moves. (The rumours that his preparation was leaked turned out to be false.)

12.♗g5 h6 13.♖fd1?! Ambitious, but, in view of Black's response, sub-optimal. 13.♗xf6 was better. 13...♕xf6 14.♘d2 is the position from the comment to Black's 13th move, just without a rook on d1. This means that Black is fine after 14...♗e6 15.♕b5 ♕e7 16.♘e4 ♖ac8 when White doesn't have ♘d6, while after 17.♘c5 b6 18.♘xe6 ♕xe6 19.♗d5 ♕e8, with ...♘e7 next, Black has few problems.

13...♗e6!



The precise move that Black needed to know (or find over the board). Now it is Black who is somewhat better as in the ensuing endgame White doesn't have compensation for the weak pawns on the queenside.

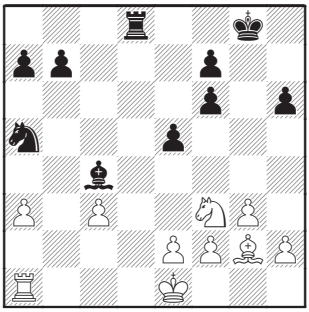
13...♕e7?! 14.♗xf6 ♕xf6 15.♘d2 leaves Black a full tempo down compared to the game and this gives White an initiative. 15...♗e6 16.♕b5 ♕e7 17.♘e4 and the rook on d1 comes in quite useful in controlling the d6-square.

14.♖xd8 ♗xc4 15.♖xa8 ♖xa8 16.♗xf6 White cannot keep the pair of bishops because the pawn on e2 is hanging.

16...gxf6 17.♔f1 17.♘h4!? is the engine's suggestion, giving up the pawn immediately. After 17...♗xe2 18.♘f5 the idea is that 18...♔h7 is met by 19.♗e4 and White is safe.

17...♖d8 18.♔e1 ♘a5

A spectacular victory which spiralled into a big controversy: Hans Moke Niemann
Photo: David Llada



With simple moves Black increases his control over the queenside.

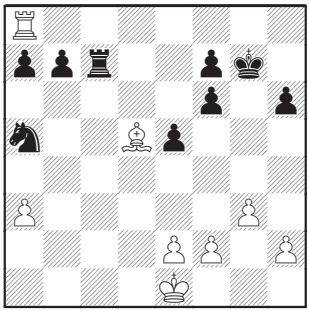
19.♖d1 ♖c8! A move that was widely discussed as a possible one that was 'suggested' to Niemann. The logic behind this assumption was that instead of exchanging rooks with an easy draw against the World Champion Black decides to keep the rooks on to increase his winning chances. While this 'logic' is logical for players with a lack of self-confidence, it is inconceivable for strong players who trust their own ability and who try to squeeze everything out of a position, irrespective of who they are playing against. Objectively, against both rook moves White should be able to draw.

20.♘d2 Carlsen strives for activity and gives up the pawn immediately.

20.♗h3 was an alternative. 20...♗e6 *(20...♖c7 21.♖d7 either exchanges rooks or activates the white one.)* 21.♗xe6 fxe6 22.♘d2 ♖xc3 23.♘e4 with the idea of 23...♖xa3? 24.♖d7! and the well-known perpetual check mechanism ♘f6-h7 saves the game for White.

20...♗e6 21.c4 ♗xc4 22.♘xc4 ♖xc4 23.♖d8+ ♔g7 24.♗d5 The activity of White's pieces should be sufficient to draw the game.

24...♖c7 25.♖a8

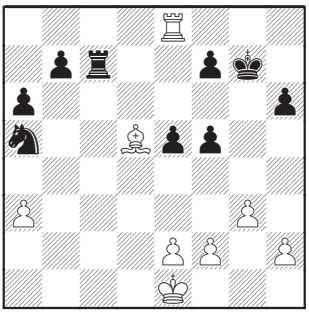


This wasn't strictly necessary and it shows some degree of impatience, a need to do something at all costs.

25.f3! puts the ball in Black's court to come up with something constructive. In addition to this, it prevents the ...e4 move that Black successfully played in the game. 25...f5 *(25...♘c6 26.♗xc6 bxc6 27.♔d2 and the king will easily blockade the passed c-pawn; 25...b5 26.♖b8 ♖c5 27.e4 and again it is not easy to see how Black can make progress; 25...♘c4 26.♗xc4 ♖xc4 27.♖d7 ♖a4 28.♖xb7 ♖xa3 29.g4 is a drawable rook endgame for White.)* 26.♖e8 *f6 (26...♔f6 27.♖h8 forces the king back.)* 27.♖g8+ ♔h7 28.♖f8 with a repetition.

25...a6 26.♖b8 f5! Black improves the position in the centre and that of his king.

27.♖e8



27...e4! This is the difference compared to the white move 25.f3 that he could have played. Things are still manageable, though.

28.g4?! A rash decision.

28.f3 was a better undermining move. After 28...exf3 29.exf3 ♖d7 30.♗a2 ♘c6 the knight is liberated, but White has counterplay against Black's pawn on f5 after 31.♗b1 ♖d5 *(31...♔f6 32.♖h8 forces the king back.)* 32.f4, fixing the pawn on f5; 28.♖d8 is a move that refrains from any undermining and is preferred by the engine. However, it can be observed in this game that Carlsen had a constant need 'to do' something and this usually led to the deterioration of his position. 28...♔f6 29.h4 ♘c6 *(29...♔e5 30.f4+ exf3 31.♗xf3 ♘c4 32.♖h8 wins the pawn on h6 and this gives White a strong passed pawn on the h-file.)* 30.♗xc6 ♖xc6 31.a4 when Black will capture the a-pawn but White will take the b-pawn, with a drawn rook endgame.

28...♖c5! This dislodges the bishop from the central location.

29.♗a2 29.♖d8 ♔f6 threatens both ...fxg4 and ...♔e5.

29...♘c4 29...fxg4! was better, as after 30.♖xe4 f5 Black has got rid of his weaknesses and can concentrate on the queenside.

30.a4? Carlsen avoids a rook endgame, but here his evaluation and intuition fail him.

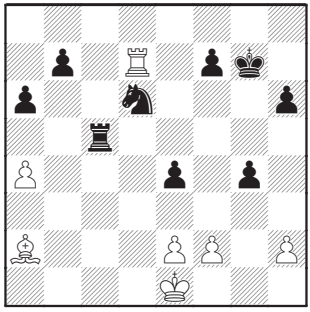
30.♗xc4 ♖xc4 31.gxf5 ♖a4 looks scary as, after taking the a-pawn, Black will have two connected passed pawns, but it turns out that after 32.♖b8! b5 33.♖b6 ♖xa3 34.♔d2 the pawns are not going anywhere and Black cannot use his king to help them. The engine claims that this is a draw!

30...♘d6 Now the knight controls everything and Black should be winning.

31.♖e7 fxg4 A natural move: Black is now two pawns up.

31...♖c2! is stronger, but it requires some calculation. The point is that after 32.♗d5 ♖c1+! 33.♔d2 ♖c5 34.♗a2 fxg4 35.♖d7 ♘c4+ is with check, so Black remains two pawns up.

32.♖d7



32...e3! 33.fxe3 ♘e4 Now White has all the weaknesses and the knight is dominating.

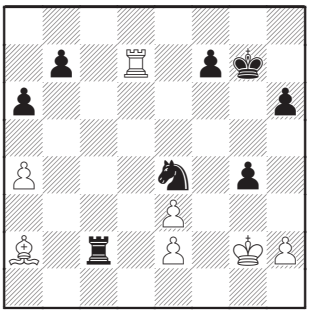
34.♔f1 This is a better practical try than the immediate capture on f7.

34.♖xf7+ ♔g6 35.♔f1 ♖c1+ 36.♔g2 ♖c2 37.♗d5 ♖xe2+ 38.♔g1 ♘c3 39.♗c4 b5! is winning for Black: he has a passed pawn on the queenside and White's kingside is in ruins.

34...♖c1+? Black plays by analogy with the line from the previous comment, but this misses the win.

34...♖f5+! was stronger, after 35.♔g2 b5 everything is under control.

35.♔g2 ♖c2



36.♗xf7! This is the difference: the bishop escapes the attacks by taking the pawn and threatening a discovered check.

36...♖xe2+ 37.♔g1 ♖e1+ 38.♔g2 ♖e2+ 39.♔g1 ♔f6 Naturally, Black continues to play for a win.

40.♗d5? There was no time-trouble, but Carlsen still errs on the 40th move. Admittedly, the saving line was anything but easy.

40.♖xb7! ♘g5 41.♗h5! was the saving resource, when White eliminates enough Black pawns to simplify the position. Still, after 41...♘f3+ 42.♔f1 ♖a2 the only saving move is 43.h4!! ♘h2+ 44.♔g1. g3 doesn't lead anywhere as the bishop dominates the knight. 45.♖b6+ ♔f5 46.♖xa6 ♔e4 47.♖e6+ drives the king back.

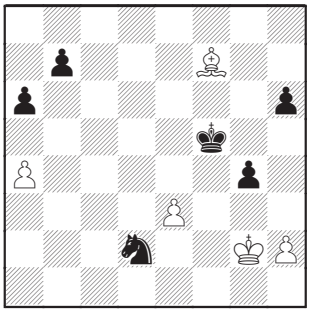
40...♖d2 The pin is now problematic, but there was still a way out for White.

41.♖f7+ ♔g6 42.♖d7? The final mistake. It's a move that is difficult to understand as White just hands a free move to Black.

42.♖e7 was the correct way. 42...♘g5 *(After 42...♖xd5 43.♖xe4 ♔f5 44.♖b4 ♖d7 45.♔g2 White is suffering, but he has decent drawing chances in this rook endgame.)* 43.♗g2! White uses the bishop to limit the knight's movement. 43...b6 *(43...b5? 44.♖a7! threatens to take on a6 with a check.)* 44.♖b7 ♖d6 45.♔f2 with good drawing chances for White.

42...♘g5! Thanks to the ...♘f3 trick Black doesn't lose material and manages to simplify the position. Now he is winning again.

43.♗f7+ ♔f5 44.♖xd2 ♘f3+ 45.♔g2 ♘xd2



The endgame is easily winning for Black as he can use the knight and the passed b-pawn to win White's bishop.

46.a5 White needs one more move to be happy (♗d5) but Black's next quickly dispels all hope.

46...♔e5 The king effectively dominates the bishop, thus defending his queenside pawns on light squares.

47.♔g3 ♘f1+ 48.♔f2 48.♔xg4 ♘xh2+ 49.♔h5 ♘f1 and eventually White will be two pawns down after he loses the pawn on a5.

48...♘xh2 49.e4 Trying to dislodge the king from the ideal e5-square.

49...♔xe4 50.♗e6 The idea is ♗c8 now, but Black now has two connected passed pawns on the kingside.

50...♔f4 51.♗c8 ♘f3 52.♗xb7 ♘e5 Black is in time to eliminate White's last pawn and remain with two extra pawns.

53.♗xa6 ♘c6 54.♗b7 ♘xa5 55.♗d5 h5 56.♗f7 h4 57.♗d5 Carlsen resigned as after 57...♔e5 the knight breaks free.

0-1

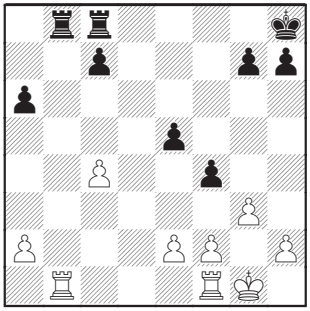
What followed next was impossible to foresee - Carlsen withdrew from the tournament. You can read more about it elsewhere in this issue. What this meant for the tournament was that after the organisers' decision to continue with nine participants Carlsen's results would be annulled, but the three games he played would still count for rating.

THE STORY OF ALIREZA FIROUZJA

The second story was that of the winner, Alireza Firouzja. After the disastrous Candidates Tournament in St Louis, the amount of work he did before Madrid started to show. In spite of losing to Nepomniachtchi in round two, because of an inferior understanding of the rook endgame that arose, he went on to win his remaining three games with the white pieces and share first place with Nepomniachtchi.

Ian Nepomniachtchi - Alireza Firouzja

9th Sinquefield Cup 2022 Saint Louis USA (2.1)



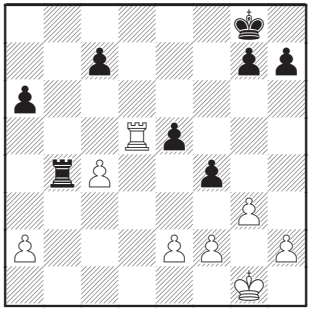
Alireza Firouzja

The duel of the future winners featured an exemplary rook endgame. White has an advantage here - Black's pawns are over-exposed and difficult to defend. This will be likely to mean a loss of at least one pawn and then Black should strive to navigate this material loss to a drawable position.

24.♖fd1 Taking over the d-file.

24...♔g8 25.♖xb8 ♖xb8 26.♖d5 Black cannot really defend the pawn on e5.

26...♖b4?!



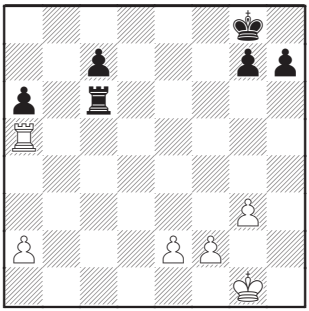
This complicates Black's task.

26...fxg3 27.hxg3 e4! was best. Now White needs to spend time going after the e-pawn. 28.♖e5 *(28.e3 ♖b2 29.a3*

♖b3 30.♖a5 ♖c3 gives Black enough counterplay; 28.♖c5 ♖b2) 28...♖b2 29.♖xe4 ♖xa2 is just equal.

27.♖xe5 fxg3 28.hxg3 ♖xc4 29.♖a5 Now Black's problem is that he will either lose the a6-pawn, thus giving White two passed pawns, one on the a-file and another on the e-file, or he will make his rook very passive by defending that pawn.

29...♖c6?



A bad move in principle - one of the basic principles of rook endgames is activity above all. Now Black drifts into passivity and, in view of White's simple plan of advancing with his pawns, seems to lose without a fight.

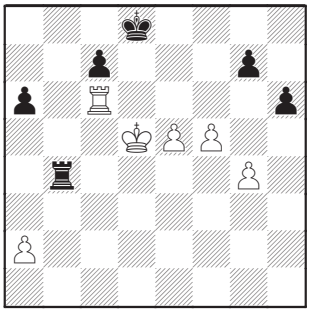
29...♖c2! 30.♔f1 c5 31.♖xa6 c4 when the passed pawns on the queenside will be exchanged and we will have a theoretically drawn endgame of three vs two on the same wing.

30.♔g2 ♔f7 31.f4 ♔e7 32.e4 ♖b6 33.♔f3 ♖c6 34.f5 ♔f7 34...♔f6 35.♔g4 with the idea e5.

35.g4 h6 36.♔f4 ♔e7 37.♖a4 Preparing e5 by controlling the fourth rank.

37...♖b6 38.♖c4 ♔d8 39.e5 ♖b1 Too late now - Black gave White 10(!) free moves before activating the rook!

40.♖c6 ♖b4+ 41.♔f3 ♖b5 42.♔e4 ♖b4+ 43.♔d5!



The combined activity of White's pieces, in addition to the unstoppable e-pawn, decides the game.

43...♖xg4 44.♔e6 ♔c8 45.♖xa6 ♔b7 46.♖a3 ♖g2 47.♔f7 ♖f2 48.f6 ♔c6 48...gxf6 49.e6 will win the rook for the e-pawn.

49.♔xg7 ♔d7 50.♔f7

1-0

Firouzja's wins showed a fighting character where he came back from inferior positions. Here are two examples, where, strangely enough, he misplayed the opening both times.

Alireza **Firouzja** – Shakhriyar **Mamedyarov**

9th Sinquefield Cup 2022 Saint Louis USA (6.4)

1.c4 In recent times Firouzja has often played this move.

1...e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 c6 This system, named after Paul Keres, is among the most ambitious ones against White's development without ♘c3 - Black simply wants to take over the centre with ...d5.

4.♘f3 The alternative is 4.d4.

4...e4 5.♘d4 d5 6.cxd5 ♕xd5 7.♘c2 In the rapid tie-break Firouzja chose 7.e3 ♘a6?! *(7...♕e5* is better.*)* 8.d3 ♗b4+

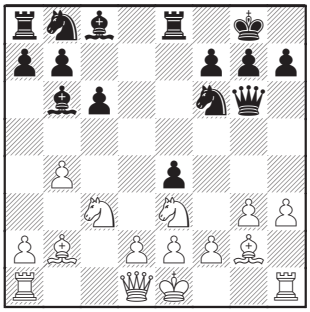
9.♘c3 and won: 1-0 (34) Firouzja,A (2778)-Nepomniachtchi,I (2792) Saint Louis USA 2022.

7...♕h5 8.h3 ♕g6 9.♘c3 ♗c5 The alternative is to put the bishop on d6, but both moves give Black good play.

10.b4 The only way to develop the dark-squared bishop is if White doesn't want to simplify the position.

10.d4 exd3 11.♕xd3 ♕xd3 12.exd3 0-0 is easy for Black - the maximum White can do is force his d-pawn all the way to d5 and initiate exchanges.

10...♗b6 11.♗b2 0-0 12.♘e3 ♖e8

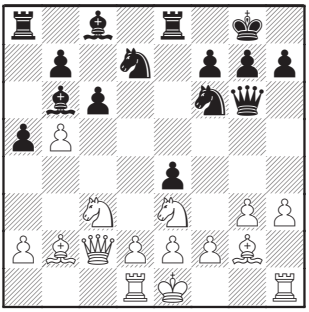


The engine already prefers Black here, though from a human perspective this is a rather complicated position: White has good development but has problems with his king. Going to the kingside can lead to being attacked. For example, see the game Ding-Nepomniachtchi from the Candidates Tournament, analysed in the July issue of BCM.

13.♕c2 White's play revolves around putting pressure on the e4-pawn.

13...♘bd7 14.♖d1 a5 Usually Black plays ...h5 in these positions, but Mamedyarov decides to undermine White's queenside first.

15.b5



15...♗d4?! The engine doesn't like this, though it looks understandable that Black should want to limit White's dark-squared bishop on the long diagonal.

15...♘c5 made sense, taking advantage of the c5-square. After 16.0-0 ♗d7 17.♘c4 ♗d8 the position remains unclear.

16.♖b1?! The engine doesn't like this either.

16.0-0 is its preference, just finishing development. With the tense position on the queenside Black cannot organise an attack on the kingside. 16...h5 17.h4 ♘e5 18.bxc6 bxc6 19.♕a4 it turns out that Black's weaknesses on the queenside force Black on the defensive.

16...c5 This stabilises the queenside and this favours Black, who seeks his play on the other side of the board.

17.h4 h5 These two moves would have probably been played at some point as after Black's ...h5 White usually wants to avoid that pawn coming to h4.

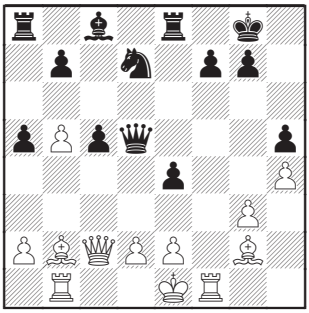
18.♘cd5? A blunder, but one that psychologically wins the game for White!

18.0-0 ♘b6 19.♘a4 ♘xa4 20.♕xa4 ♗xe3!? 21.dxe3 b6 leads to a strategically complex middlegame, with the g2-bishop buried, but that is compensated with White's control over the d-file after 22.♖bd1 and the strong, unopposed dark-squared bishop.

18...♘xd5 19.♘xd5 ♗xf2+! 20.♔xf2 ♕f5+ Black regains the piece and will be a pawn up now.

21.♔e1 21.♘f4 e3+! Winning the undefended queen on c2 is the point of Black's tactic.

21...♕xd5 22.♖f1

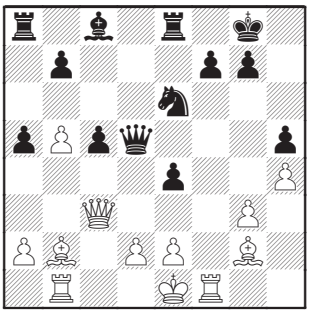


As Firouzja said, Mamedyarov was surprised that White's position isn't immediately collapsing and, seeking a decisive blow, he overpressed.

22...♘f8? The knight wants to go to d4, but it won't be stable there. This move loses all the advantage and suddenly it is Black who needs to be more careful now.

22...b6 was simple and good, preparing ...♗b7. 23.♕c3. f6 keeps the long diagonal shut and Black remains in control.

23.♕c3 ♘e6



24.♖f4! The knight on e6 defends the g7-pawn, but it blocks the e-file, so Black has problems with the pawn on e4.

24...f5? Fatally weakening the long diagonal.

Black had to give up the extra pawn with 24...♗d7 25.♖xe4 ♕f5 when the position remains tense. But it was difficult to give up so quickly the extra pawn that had been won with a cute tactic...

25.d3! White consistently opens the position for his bishops. Notice that Black still hasn't developed his queenside.

25...♘d4? This fails to keep the long diagonal closed.

25...♕xa2! 26.♖a1 ♕d5 is the strange manoeuvre the engine proposes. After 27.dxe4 ♕d4 28.♕xd4 ♘xd4 29.♗xd4 cxd4 30.exf5 White keeps the advantage in the endgame, but Black has his chances after 30...d3! 31.♗d5+ ♔h7 32.e4 ♗d7.

26.e3 ♕xa2 27.♖a1 ♕e6 28.dxe4 Black loses the pinned knight so he resigns.

1-0

The following game was extremely important for the final standings as So was leading the tournament at this stage.

Alireza **Firouzja** – Wesley **So**

9th Sinquefield Cup 2022 Saint Louis USA (8.3)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 Firouzja opts for a slow game against So, but this is not how the game will turn out...

3...♗c5 4.d3 ♘f6 5.0-0 d6 6.c3 0-0 7.h3 h6 8.♖e1 a6 9.a4 a5 Losing a tempo, but preventing White's queenside expansion.

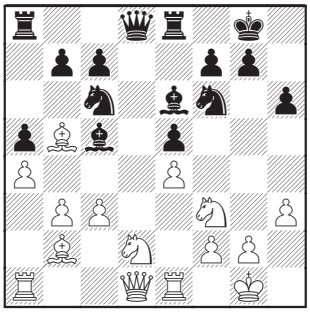
10.♘bd2 ♗e6 11.b3 The alternative is to take on e6, but that gives Black options

like ...♘h5-f4 and ...d5. Both moves are still highly theoretical.

11...♖e8 So had already played the immediate 11...d5 12.exd5 *(12.♗b5 dxe4 13.dxe4* could have led to similar play to that in the game.*)* 12...♘xd5 13.♘e4 ♗b6 14.♗d2 with a complex middlegame in the online game: 0-1 (48) Duda,J (2743)-So,W (2770) Chess.com INT 2020.

12.♗b2 Other moves are 12.♕c2, as tried recently by Giri against Praggnanandhaa at the Chessable Masters in May and 12.♗b5, as in the online game Nepomniachtchi-Anand from 2020.

12...d5 13.♗b5 dxe4 14.dxe4?!



This hands the initiative to Black.

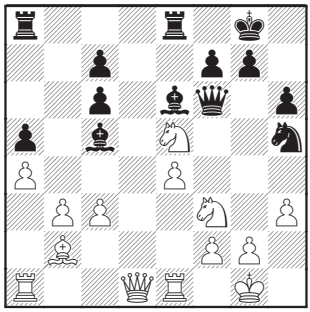
14.♘xe4 ♘xe4 15.♖xe4 ♗d5 gives Black comfortable play after 16.♗xc6 ♗xc6 17.♖xe5 ♖xe5 18.♘xe5 ♗xg2! 19.♔xg2 ♕g5+ 20.♘g4 h5 regaining the piece with easy play.

14...♘h5! With the obvious threats of ...♘f4 and ...♕f6, White suddenly finds himself under attack on the kingside.

15.♘c4? Firouzja embarks on direct play in the centre, but this should have backfired.

15.♗a3 was preferable, to exchange the dangerous bishop. After 15...♗xa3 16.♖xa3 ♕f6 17.♖e3 ♘f4 18.♕f1 White is under pressure, but no direct blow is visible.

15...♕f6 16.♗xc6 bxc6 17.♘cxe5

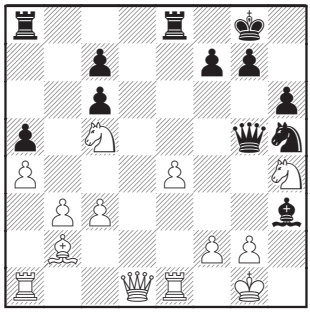


17...♗xh3! 18.♘d3 18.gxh3 ♖xe5 is devastating for White, he has a weak king with nothing in return.

18...♕g6 This is still good for Black.

18...♖ad8! was stronger, getting the last piece in the game. White still cannot take the bishop as 19.gxh3? ♘f4 20.♘d4 ♕g6+ 21.♕g4 ♘xh3+ wins the queen.

19.♘h4 ♕g5 20.♘xc5



20...♕xh4? Inserting 20...♖ad8 was again stronger, now the position is objectively equal.

21.gxh3 ♕g5+? So loses the way by going after the knight in the most direct way.

21...♖e5! was better and kept the position sharp. While objectively equal, it would have been easier to play with Black in view

of White's weak king. 22.♗c1 controls the g5-square. 22...♕xh3!? puts the pressure on White. *(22...♖xc5 is simple, but after 23.♕d4! Black has to force a draw with 23...♕xh3 24.♕xc5 ♕g4+ 25.♔f1 ♕h3+ leads to a repetition after 26.♔e2 ♖d8! 27.♖d1 ♕g4+ 28.f3 ♕g2+ 29.♕f2 ♘g3+ 30.♔e3 ♘f5+! 31.♔e2 ♘g3+)* 23.b4! the only move not to lose! *(23.♘d3? ♖d8* wins for Black.*)* 23...♖ae8! with a great positional compensation for the piece as White's pieces cannot easily coordinate. In fact, he now has another only move not to lose: 24.♕d3! ♕g4+ 25.♔f1 f5! with a mess, where White risks more.

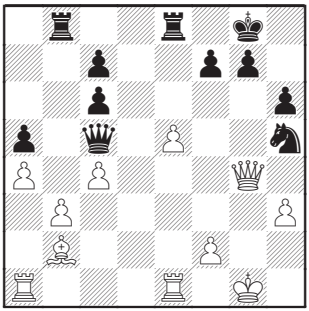
22.♕g4 22.♔h1 ♕xc5 23.♕f3 is the engine's preferred move-order, with a slight advantage to White as the positional factors favour him (better light piece) as Black no longer has an attack.

22...♕xc5 23.c4 The position stabilised now and White's long-range bishop comes to life to dominate the knight on the rim.

23...♖ab8? The quality of So's moves was deteriorating as the game progressed, a strange occurrence.

23...♕g5! would have insured against problems, though some caution was still required after 24.♗c1 ♘f6 25.♕xg5 hxg5 26.e5 ♘d7 27.♗xg5 ♖xe5 when a player like So should be expected to hold.

24.e5!



Cutting the board in half. The knight on h5 is in trouble now.

24...g6? Another mistake by So, after which it's over.

24...♖xb3 was a better try. After 25.♗d4 ♕xc4 26.♗e3 ♕xg4+ 27.hxg4 ♖xe5 28.gxh5 ♖b4 Black has kept drawing chances in view of the fact that he will be likely to take both pawns on h5 and a4.

25.♗a3 ♕b6 26.e6! With Black's queen stranded on the queenside it's not a surprise that Black's kingside falls apart.

26...c5 27.exf7+ ♔xf7 28.♕d7+ ♔f8 29.♕d5 ♔g7 30.♗xc5 ♘f6 31.♗xb6 ♘xd5 32.♖xe8 After 32.♖xe8 ♖xe8 33.♗xa5 White is two pawns up with a technically winning position.

1-0

A strange game by So, who completely misplayed a winning attack and then even went on to lose. But Firouzja deserves credit for seeking his chances and converting them when given the opportunity.

At the end of the nine rounds, Firouzja and Nepomniachtchi shared first with five points so they went on to play a tie-break. Nepomniachtchi didn't use his excellent chances in the first game and blundered a piece in the second, thus having a 'sad end of a sad event'.

Even without Carlsen, winning the extremely strong tournament in Saint Louis is a major success for Firouzja, who continues to progress at the age of 19 and is certain to become a permanent fixture in all future elite events.

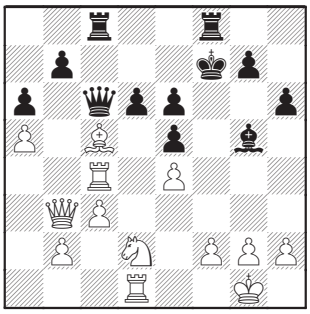
NEPOMNIACHTCHI'S PERFORMANCE

Nepomniachtchi's result is also a success, though he certainly rued his missed chances. Perhaps somewhat surprising, the debacle of Dubai only gave him confidence and his level and results have generally been very high ever since, culminating with his win of the Madrid Candidates.

One of his games featured a curious oversight.

Leinier Dominguez Perez – Ian Nepomniachtchi

9th Sinquefield Cup 2022 Saint Louis USA (3.3)



White took a knight on c5 and now Black has a choice where to capture. Taking on c5 is depressing, but the weak pawns control a lot of squares so it's not that easy for White to find a breakthrough. But Nepomniachtchi takes on d2...

22...♗xd2? 22...dxc5 23.♘f3 ♗f6 looks pretty bad for Black, but he isn't losing directly.

23.♖xd2? Returning the favour. Dominguez thought for quite some time here so he must have calculated the winning alternative, with the only possible explanation being that he didn't calculate it precisely.

23.♗xd6! wins for White, with two lines to check: 23...♕xc4 *(Or 23...♕xd6 24.♕xb7+ ♕e7 25.♕xe7+ ♔xe7 26.♖xc8 ♖xc8 27.♖xd2 with a winning rook endgame.)* 24.♕xb7+ ♔g8 25.♗xf8 threatening mate on g7. 25...♖c7 *(25...♖xf8 26.♖xd2* leaves White with two extra pawns.*)* 26.♕b4 ♕e2 27.♖f1 and White defends everything and remains with two extra pawns and a winning position.

23...dxc5 Now Black is only slightly worse and eventually the game was drawn.

½-½

Ian Nepomniachtchi

CARUANA, SO AND THE REST

So and Caruana shared third but it is So who has more to be sorry about. Until his fateful game with Firouzja he was his usual super-solid self and it seemed he would win the event, but something broke his stride in that game and he had to settle for less.

Caruana had an event that hopefully stopped the downward trend that started with the second half of the Candidates and continued in Chennai at the Olympiad. He did lose one game, to So, but won two, beating Vachier and Niemann in the last round, to emerge on a plus score and finally win some rating points. Caruana risked dropping out of the top 10 but even now

he is a whopping 30 points lower than his usual rating of around 2790-2800.

The rest of the field cannot be very proud of their results, with Aronian, Mamedyarov and Vachier losing rating - the Frenchman in particular, losing 10 rating points and dropping to number 15 in the world on the rating list.

The ninth edition of the Sinquefield Cup will be remembered not for the chess, but rather for the scandal that was picked up by everybody, even media outside of the chess world. It is sad that chess got all the publicity for all the wrong reasons, but let's hope that the old adage that there is no such thing as bad publicity will also be valid for chess.

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and Fabiano Caruana

2022 SINQUEFIELD CUP - Final Standings

Rk	NAME	FED	Score	RTG	TPR	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	GM Firouzja, Alireza	FRA	5.0	2778	2848	½	0	1	½	-	1	½	1	½
2	GM Nepomniachtchi, Ian	FID	5.0	2792	2847	-	1	½	½	½	½	½	1	½
3	GM So, Wesley	USA	4.5	2771	2797	½	½	1	½	½	1	-	0	½
4	GM Caruana, Fabiano	USA	4.5	2758	2799	½	½	0	1	½	½	½	1	-
5	GM Dominguez Perez, Leinier	USA	4.0	2745	2758	½	½	½	½	½	-	½	½	½
6	GM Aronian, Levon	USA	3.5	2759	2713	½	-	0	½	½	1	½	0	½
7	GM Niemann, Hans Moke	USA	3.5	2688	2722	½	1	-	½	½	0	½	0	½
8	GM Mamedyarov, Shakhriyar	AZE	3.0	2757	2669	½	0	½	-	½	0	½	½	½
9	GM Vachier-Lagrave, Maxime	FRA	3.0	2757	2669	½	½	½	0	½	0	½	-	½
10	GM Carlsen, Magnus	NOR	0.0	2861	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Tournament report

Northumbria Chess Festival

GM, IM and Open Events

By IM Shaun Taulbut

This festival had two all play alls: one with grandmaster norms and one with international master norms and two nine round Open Swisses, organised by Tim Wall.

Matthew Wadsworth won the GM All Play All with 6.5/9, followed by Andrei Maksimenko, James Moreby and Bodan Lalic who were on five points. Daniel Fischer and Bao Nghia Dong won the IM All Play All with 6.5/9 both achieving international master norms. The Top Swiss was won jointly by Brandon Clarke and Marcus Harvey with 7.5/9.

We look at some of the games from three events starting with Matthew Wadsworth

Mark **Hebden** - Matthew J **Wadsworth**

Northumbria GM 2022 Newcastle ENG (7.5)

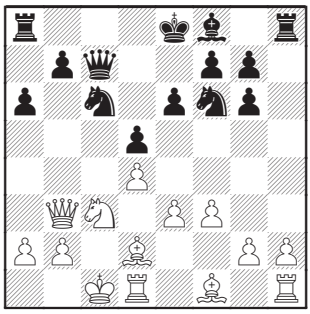
1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.c4 c6 4.e3 ♗f5 5.cxd5 cxd5 6.♕b3 White attacks b7 and d5 taking advantage of the Black queenbishop already having moved to f5; Black has adequate resources.

6...♕c7 7.♗d2 7.♘c3 e6 8.♗d2 a6 transposes to the game.

7...a6 8.♘c3 e6 9.♘h4 Putting the question to the bishop which is now not able to retreat to c8 and aiming to exchange this bishop for a knight.

9...♗e4 10.f3 10.♘xe4 ♘xe4 11.♖c1 ♘c6 12.♗d3 ♘xd2 13.♔xd2 is slightly better for Black.

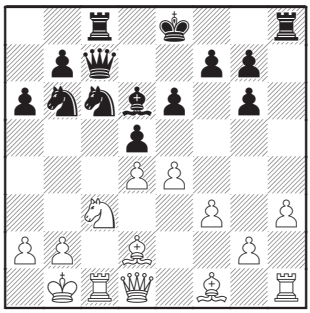
10...♗g6 11.0-0-0 ♘c6 12.♘xg6 hxg6



A typical position from this opening; White has the two bishops but Black is solid with no weaknesses and Black has the half open h-file.

13.♔b1 ♗d6 14.♖c1 ♖c8 Very risky is 14...♗xh2 15.♘a4 b5 *(15...♖b8 16.♘c5 ♔f8 17.f4 ♔g8 18.♗e1 White is better ; the bishop is trapped on h2)* 16.♘c5 ♘d7 17.e4 ♘xd4 18.♕e3 e5 19.♘xa6 with a winning advantage.

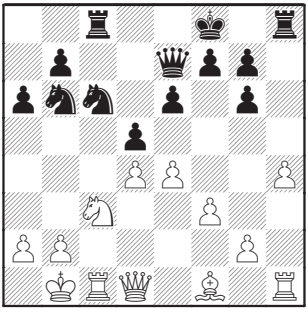
15.h3 ♘d7 16.♕d1 ♘b6 17.e4



White plays to open up the position but the drawback is the pawn on d4 is now weak.

17...♔f8 Artificial castling is a good choice here leaving the rook on h8.

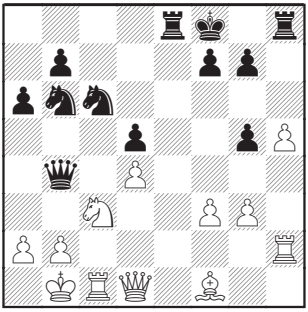
18.h4 ♕d8 19.♗g5 ♗e7 20.♗xe7+ ♕xe7



Black is very solid and can attack the white pawns on d4 and h4

21.g3 ♕b4 22.exd5 exd5 23.♖h2 Defending the d-pawn indirectly by the threat of ♖d2 so now Black increases the pressure using his active rook on h8.

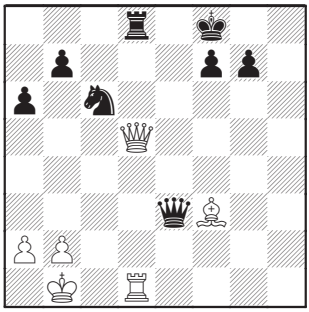
23...g5 24.h5 ♖e8



25.f4 If 25.g4 ♖h6 26.♖d2 ♖f6 27.♕c2 ♔g8 is better for Black but this may be best for White.

25...gxf4 26.gxf4 ♕xd4 27.♖d2 ♕xf4 28.♘xd5 ♘xd5 29.♖xd5 ♖h6 Black develops his rook with active play; Black has a strong position.

30.♗g2 ♖he6 31.♕d2 ♕f6 32.♖f1 ♕h4 33.♕c3 ♖e1+ 34.♖d1 ♖xd1+ 35.♖xd1 ♕xh5 36.♗f3 ♕e5 37.♕b3 ♕e3 38.♕d5 ♖d8



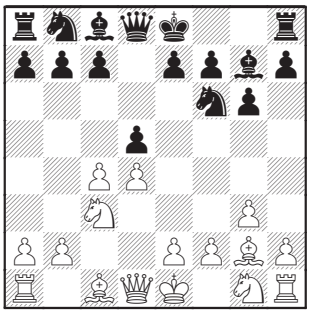
Exchanging off the rooks after the White queen moves leaves Black with a winning position with his extra pawns.

0-1

James **Moreby** - Tom **O'Gorman**

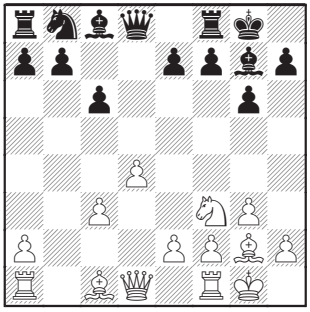
Northumbria GM 2022 Newcastle ENG (6.3)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.g3 d5 5.♗g2



White pressurizes d5 so Black opts to recapture with a piece.

5...c6 6.cxd5 ♘xd5 7.♘f3 0-0 8.0-0 ♘xc3 9.bxc3



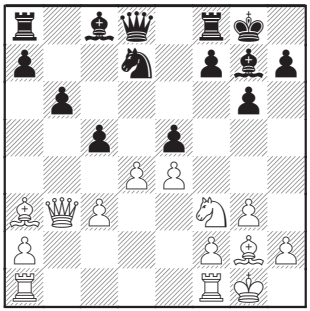
White has the edge with his pawn on d4 commanding the centre so Black plays to challenge this with ...e5.

9...♘d7 10.e4 e5 11.♕b3 Also good are 11.♖e1 or 11.♕c2.

11...b6 Better is 11...exd4 12.cxd4 ♘c5 13.♕e3 ♖e8 14.e5 ♘e6 15.♖b1 with a slight edge for White.

12.♗a3 12.♗g5 ♗f6 13.h4 is also worth consideration.

12...c5



13.♕d5 13.♖ad1 is good aiming for pressure down the d-file.

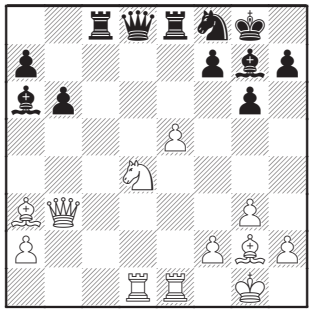
13...♗a6 13...♖b8 is better with the idea of ...♗b7 driving away the queen.

14.♖fe1 exd4 15.cxd4 ♖e8 16.e5 ♖c8 17.♖ad1 After 17.♖ac1 cxd4 18.e6 fxe6 19.♖xe6 ♖xc1+ 20.♗xc1 White is much better.

17...♘f8 Better is 17...cxd4 and if 18.e6 ♖xe6 19.♖xe6 ♗c4.

18.♕b3 cxd4 18...c4 19.♕a4 ♗b7 20.d5 is better for White.

19.♘xd4



With dangerous threats against the black queen.

19...♕c7 20.♘c6 ♗xe5 If 20...♗b7 21.♗d6 wins.

21.♗xf8 ♗f6 21...♔xf8 22.♕a3+ wins a piece.

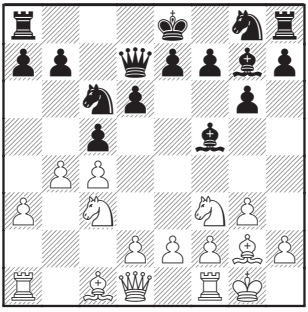
22.♗h6 ♖xe1+ 23.♖xe1 ♕d7 24.♕a3 ♗b5 25.♘e7+ ♗xe7 26.♕xe7 ♕xe7 27.♖xe7 ♖d8 28.♗f3 ♖d3 29.♖xa7 f5 30.♗e2

1-0

Angus **Dunnington** – William **Claridge-Hansen**

Northumbria IM 2022 Newcastle ENG (1.2)

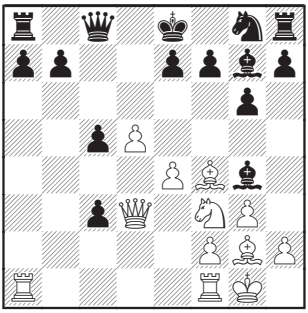
1.♘f3 c5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♗g2 g6 4.c4 ♗g7 5.♘c3 d6 6.0-0 ♗f5 7.a3 ♕d7 8.b4



8...♘xb4 9.e4 After 9.axb4 cxb4 10.♘h4 bad is 10..♗h3 *(10...♗e6 11.♖b1 bxc3 12.♖xb7 ♕c8 13.♕a4+ ♔f8 14.dxc3 White is better; 10...bxc3 11.♘xf5 gxf5 12.♖b1 ♖b8 13.dxc3 White is slightly better)* 11.♗xh3 ♕xh3 12.♕a4+.

9...♗e6 10.axb4 cxb4 11.d4 bxc3 12.♕d3 ♕c7 13.c5 13.d5 is met by 13..♗d7.

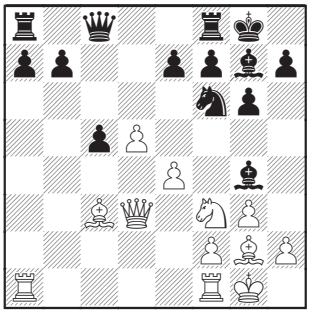
13...dxc5 14.d5 ♗g4 15.♗f4 ♕c8



Black has extra pawns which should win the game.

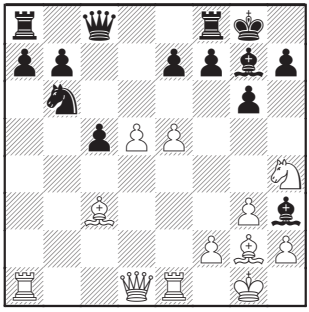
16.♗e5 If 16.e5 ♘h6 17.♕xc3 ♘f5 aiming at d4 retains an edge for Black.

16...♘f6 17.♗xc3 0-0



Black has his extra pawns and has castled safely so should win with best play.

18.e5 ♗f5 19.♕d1 ♘d7 20.♖e1 ♘b6 21.♘h4 ♗h3



22.♗e4 ♖d8 23.♕f3 ♗g4 24.♕h1 ♗d7 24...♕c7 25.f4 a5 26.♗xa5 c4 is strong as now White has a counter chance.

25.f4 25.d6 is worth consideration uncovering the queen and bishop battery.

25...♘a4 26.♗a5 After 26.d6 ♘xc3 27.♗xb7 ♕b8 28.dxe7 ♖e8 29.♗xa8 ♕xa8 30.♕xa8 ♖xa8 31.♖ed1 ♘xd1 32.♖xd1 White wins back the piece.

26...b6 27.♗d2 ♖b8 28.f5 ♗xe5 29.♖xa4 ♗xa4 30.fxg6 hxg6 31.♗xg6 ♗d4+

32.♗e3 fxg6 33.♘xg6 33.♕e4 ♗xe3+ 34.♖xe3 ♖d6 35.♕xe7 ♕d7 36.♕g5 ♕g7 is winning.

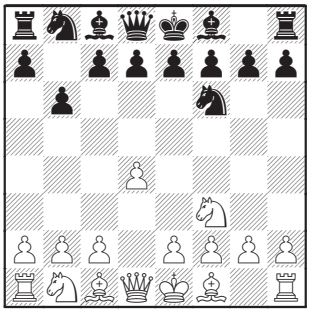
33...♕g4

0-1

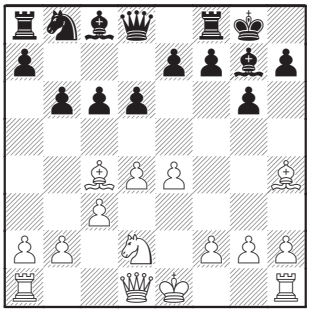
Danny **Gormally** – Marcus R **Harvey**

Northumbria Masters 2022 Newcastle ENG (7.1)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 b6

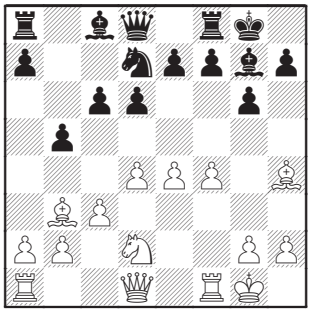


3.♗g5 ♘e4 4.♗h4 g6 5.♘bd2 ♘xd2 6.♘xd2 ♗g7 7.c3 0-0 8.e4 d6 9.♗c4 c6



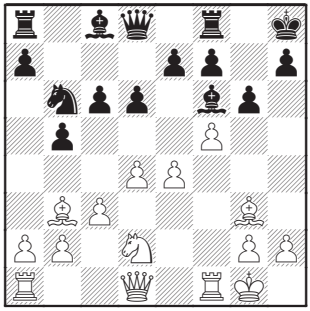
The game has transposed to a Pirc/Modern Defence against 1.e4.

10.0-0 b5 11.♗b3 ♘d7 12.f4



12...♗f6 13.♗g3 13.♕e1 is strong here.

13...♘b6 14.f5 ♔h8

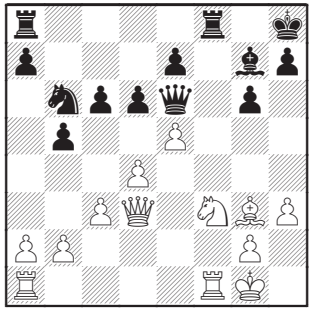


White has the edge with pressure on the black kingside.

15.fxg6 15.♕e2 is good.

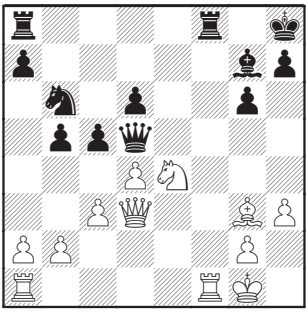
15...fxg6 16.♘f3 ♗g4 17.♕d3 ♕d7 18.h3 18.♖ae1 ♗g7 is also playable.

18...♗e6 19.e5 ♗g7 20.♗xe6 ♕xe6



21.exd6 21.♕e4 retaining the strong pawn on e5 is good.

21...exd6 22.♘g5 ♕d5 23.♘e4 c5



24.♘xd6 cxd4 25.♖xf8+ 25.♕xb5 dxc3 26.bxc3 ♗xc3 27.♖ac1 ♗g7 retains a slight edge for White.

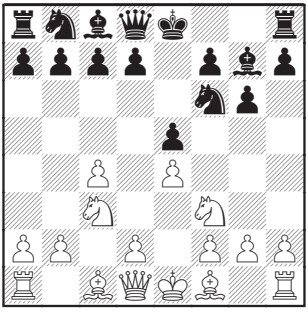
25...♖xf8 26.♘xb5 dxc3 Now White loses after 27.♕xd5 cxb2

0-1

Marcus R **Harvey** - Brandon **Clarke**

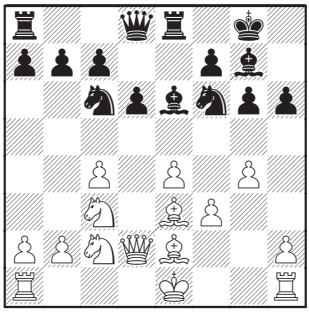
Northumbria Masters 2022 Newcastle ENG (6.1)

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 g6 3.e4 e5 4.♘f3 ♗g7



5.d4 5.♘xe5 ♘xe4 6.♘xe4 ♗xe5 7.d4 ♗g7 8.♗g5 f6 9.♗e3.

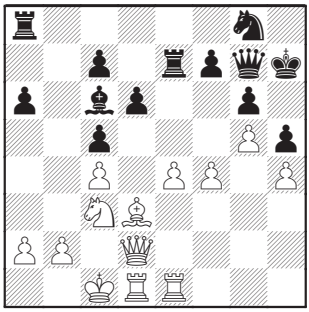
5...exd4 6.♘xd4 0-0 7.♗e2 ♖e8 8.f3 ♘c6 9.♘c2 d6 10.♗g5 h6 11.♗e3 ♘h5 12.g4 ♘f6 13.♕d2 ♗e6



Black is cramped and the pawn on h6 is weak; at the moment White cannot capture because of a queen check on h4 after ...♘xe4.

14.0-0-0 ♔h7 15.h3 a6 16.g5 ♘g8 17.h4 Very Strong is17.gxh6 ♗xh6 *(17...♘xh6 18.h4)* 18.h4 ♗xe3 19.♕xe3.

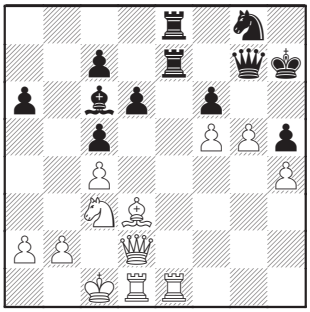
17...h5 18.♘d4 ♗d7 19.♘xc6 bxc6 20.♗d4 ♗xd4 21.♕xd4 c5 22.♕d2 ♗c6 23.♕f4 ♕e7 24.♗d3 ♕f8 25.♕d2 ♕g7 26.♖he1 ♖e7 27.f4



White has a big plus due to the black knight being buried on g8.

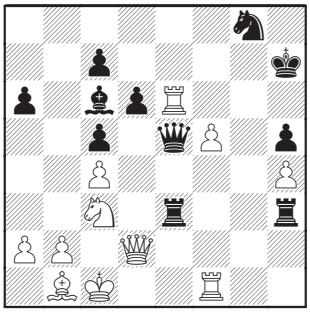
27...♖ae8 28.f5 gxf5 Better is 28...♕e5 29.♔b1 ♕g3 30.♖h1 ♔h8 31.f6 ♖e5 32.♖dg1 ♕f3 33.♔a1 still with a plus for White.

29.exf5 f6



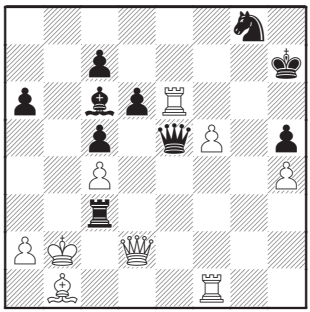
Now White switches his rook with effect.

30.♖g1 ♖e3 31.♖df1 ♖h3 32.gxf6 ♕xf6 33.♗b1 ♖ee3 34.♖g6 ♕e5 35.♖e6



35...♖xc3+ If 35...♕d4 36.f6+ ♔h8 37.♖xe3 ♖xe3 38.f7 wins.

36.bxc3 ♖xc3+ 37.♔b2



Black has a number of discovered checks but no defence.
37...♖d3+ 38.♖xe5 ♖xd2+ 39.♔c1 dxe5 40.f6+ e4 41.♔xd2

1-0

Northumbria GM 2022 Newcastle ENG Fri 26th Aug 2022 - Tue 30th Aug 2022. Category: 6. Ave: (2384)

Rk	NAME	FED	Elo	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Pts	TRP
1	IM Wadsworth, Matthew J	ENG	2418		=	=	=	=	1	=	1	1	1	6.5	2546
2	GM Maksimenko, Andrei	UKR	2424	=		=	=	1	=	=	=	=	=	5	2422
3	FM Moreby, James	ENG	2300	=	=		=	=	=	1	=	0	1	5	2436
4	GM Lalic, Bogdan	CRO	2415	=	=	=		=	=	=	=	1	=	5	2423
5	IM Willow, Jonah B	ENG	2393	=	0	=	=		1	=	0	1	=	4.5	2383
6	GM Hebden, Mark L	ENG	2476	0	=	=	=	0		1	1	=	=	4.5	2373
7	FM Han, Yichen	NED	2332	=	=	0	=	=	0		=	1	1	4.5	2389
8	FM Grieve, Harry	ENG	2390	0	=	=	=	1	0	=		0	=	3.5	2303
9	FM Makkar, Rajat	FRA	2300	0	=	1	0	0	=	0	1		=	3.5	2316
10	FM O'Gorman, Tom	IRL	2389	0	=	0	=	=	=	0	=	=		3	2258

A DECADE OF GREAT CHESS

By GM Aleksandar Colovic
Photo: Norway Chess Official

The 10th edition of the traditional tournament in Stavanger - which took place from 31 May to 10 June - ended with a victory for Magnus Carlsen, who has now won 5 out of 10 Norway Chess tournaments. However, the real star of the event was the former World Champion Viswanathan Anand

Some of the strongest world players came together for what was a celebration worthy of a decade-long chess spectacle. The event was marked by two peculiarities.

The first peculiarity of the tournament was that there had to be a winner after a draw - an Armageddon game with White's 10 minutes against Black's 7 forced the first player to win if he were to gain one-and-a-half points as opposed to Black's one. As usual in Armageddon, in the event of a draw Black was the "winner" and got one-and-a-half points. The second peculiarity was the time control - two hours for the whole game with only a 10-second increment after move 40.

The World Champion won his fourth Norway Chess in a row. But the main story of the event was another champ - the former world champion, Vishy Anand. Here, we'll take a look at some of his games and what we can learn from them.

ANAND LIKE CAPABLANCA

The main story for much of the tournament was the fantastic run of the former World Champion Anand. He had a great result at the Superbet rapid and blitz before coming to Norway, but both results had the same scenario.

In Romania, Anand started with 5/5 in the rapid and - in spite of losing to Rapport - won confidently with 7/9. But in the blitz section he was already plagued with inconsistency: wins were followed by losses and he only managed a +1, for 9.5/18 and shared fourth.

This sequenceof an excellent start followed by a period of inconsistency

and then a drop of level was in plain sight in Stavanger.

Anand's performance at the age of 52 reminds me of Alekhine's words about Capablanca. He said that until his last days Capablanca was capable of producing masterpieces, but he no longer possessed the necessary restraint for success in major tournaments.

This restraint, which means an ability to control one's impulsiveness, in addition to the required mental stamina to keep the same level of play (i.e. to avoid blunders) for the duration of the whole event were Anand's problems in Romania and in Norway.

He started brilliantly by winning his first two classical games. In Round One he outplayed MVL in very convincing fashion.

Viswanathan **Anand** – Maxime **Vachier-Lagrave**

Norway Chess (1.4)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.♗b5+ After so many years of constant use by pretty much everybody, the Moscow Variation has a main line status just like the Open Sicilian.

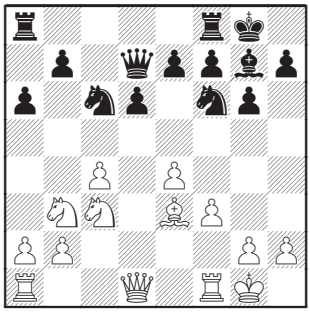
3...♗d7 Lately the more complex 3...♘d7 has seen more of the light of day; basically, it is all a matter of taste when choosing between that, the game move and 3...♘c6, though the last is the least popular choice.
4.♗xd7+ ♕xd7 Taking with the knight is also possible. The queen recapture is a bit more ambitious as Black wants to develop the knight to the more active square on c6.

5.c4 In the Moscow Variation White usually aims for the Maroczy setup as he has the benefit of having exchanged the light-squared bishops; thus placing his pawns on light squares does not limit any of his pieces.

5...♘f6 6.♘c3 ♘c6 7.d4 cxd4 8.♘xd4 g6 9.f3 Defending the pawn on e3 and allowing for the development of the bishop on e3 without fearing ...♘g4.

9...♗g7 10.♗e3 0-0 11.0-0 a6 Black has a wide choice in this tabiya, but the move chosen by Vachier is the most popular.

12.♘b3!?



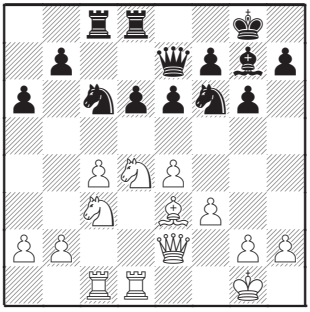
White has a wide choice of move here - 12.a4, 12.♕d3, 12.♖c1, to name just the most popular ones. Anand plays a very rare move, but it is in the top two choices of the engine starting from a certain depth.

12...e6 A natural move in reply, but it appears to give White what he wants. It's curious to see how Anand outprepares the younger generation - he checked and played a computer move in a theoretically very common position while his younger opponent didn't bother to check at all!

12...b5 is one of the engine's choices, but the compensation it claims after 13.cxb5 axb5 14.♘xb5 ♕b7 15.a4 ♘d7 16.♖f2 ♘b6 is not that obvious to the unprepared human eye after 17.♘3d4; 12...♘e5 is a direct move that leads to forcing play after 13.♕e2 ♕c6 14.♘d2 ♖fc8 15.b3 b5. Black creates queenside play thanks to the vulnerability of the knight on c3. After 16.♖ac1 Black has a choice. The engine likes a neutral move like 19...h5, but even the more direct 16...bxc4 17.♘a4 ♖ab8 18.♘xc4 ♘xc4 19.♖xc4 ♕b5 gives Black satisfactory counterplay.

13.♕e2 Now White manages to establish the central grip and prevents Black from easily liberating his play.

13...♕e7 14.♖fd1 ♖fd8 15.♖ac1 ♖ac8 16.♘d4



Viswanathan Anand:
An excellent start followed by a period of inconsistency and a drop

Anand's only imprecision in this game, but one that was not that obvious to exploit.

16.♘a4 is the engine's preference, targeting the b6-square. After 16...♘d7 17.♖c2 White keeps control of the position, though Black is solid.

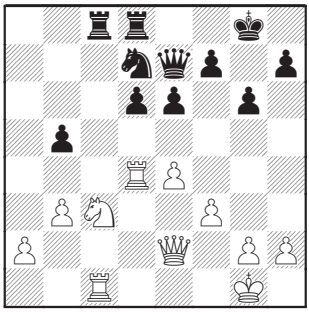
16...♘d7 This is a good alternative.

16...d5! appears to equalise, but Black had to see that after 17.♘xc6 ♖xc6 18.e5 ♘e8 19.cxd5 exd5 20.f4 ♘c7 Black is in time to play ...f6 next and get rid of the pawn on e5. Still, even after that Black will have an IQP on d5 and a weaker king, so it's not surprising that this wasn't that clear to Vachier.

17.b3 b5? Typical Vachier, when his strength of always seeking active counterplay is taken to the extreme and becomes a weakness.

The "sterile" 17...♘xd4 18.♗xd4 ♗xd4+ 19.♖xd4 ♘f6 should hold easily for Black as he can defend the pawn on d6 while at the same time aiming for the liberating ...b5 and ...d5.

18.cxb5 ♘xd4 19.♗xd4 ♗xd4+ 20.♖xd4 axb5



21.♕d2! Anand plays perfectly. He prevents ...♕g5 and attacks the pawn on d6. He will win a pawn and manage to curb Black's activity.

Vachier probably counted on 21.♕xb5?! ♖c5 22.♕e2 ♕g5 when Black has enough compensation thanks to the weaknesses White has on the c-file: the unstable knight on c3 and the vulnerable rook on c1.

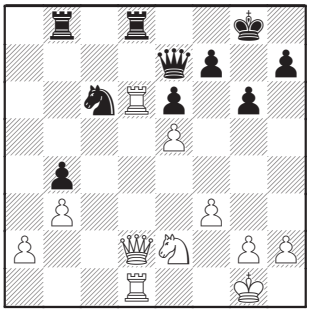
21...♖b8?! Black decides to give up the d6-pawn, but White's control of the d-file will prevent him from creating anything serious.

It was better to give up the pawn on b5 with 21...♘f6 and after 22.♘xb5 ♖xc1+ 23.♕xc1 e5 24.♖d2 d5 he has some compensation for the pawn.

22.♖xd6 b4 23.♘e2 ♘e5 24.♖d1 White's domination on the d-file paralyses Black.

24...♘c6?! The endgame after 24...♖xd6 25.♕xd6 ♕xd6 26.♖xd6 ♖c8 27.♖d2 g5 28.♔f2 gives Black certain drawing chances, but it's no fun to play, especially for an active player like Vachier. Here again we see his stylistic preference playing against him.

25.e5!



Fixing the position of the rook on d6.

25...♕a7+ 26.♔h1 ♕f2 Looks active, but the lone queen cannot do anything.

27.♖c1 White's central domination is the decisive factor.

27...♖xd6 28.exd6 ♘e5 29.h3 Black doesn't threaten anything and White takes the time to open a luft and take control over the g4-square in order to be able to play f4.

29...♖b5 30.f4 ♘d7 30...♘f3 doesn't work in more than one way, the most sadistic being 31.d7! ♘xd2 32.d8♕+ ♔g7 33.♕xd2, winning a piece and keeping his king's position intact.

31.♕d4 Forcing the exchange of queens as the aim is ♖c8 with mating threats.

31...♕xd4 After 31...♕xe2 Black is mated: 32.♖c8+ ♘f8 33.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 34.♕h8#.

32.♘xd4 The rest is simple.

32...♖d5 33.♘c6 ♖xd6 34.♘xb4 The two connected passed pawns win the game for White.

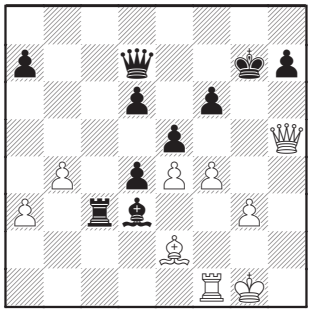
34...e5 35.fxe5 ♘xe5 36.♖c5 ♖d1+ 37.♔h2 f6 38.a4 ♖b1 39.♖c3 ♖a1 40.♖c7 Black resigned as after 40.♖c7 ♖b1 41.a5! the pawn runs very fast: 41...♖xb3 42.♘c2 with a6-a7 and then ♖c8 and a8♕ to come.

1-0

In round two he won on time against Veselin Topalov - a great contender from Anand's era - in what was an equal position. It looked like a case of 'winner's luck' for Anand as he continued to play well by winning the Armageddon against Wang Hao and drawing the classical game against So. He was even winning in the Armageddon against the American, but let it slip.

Wesley **So** – Viswanathan **Anand**

Norway Chess (8.2)



Black crashed through and White's only hope is to create something on the kingside.

31.fxe5 White naturally opens the f-file...

31...dxe5?? And Black replies automatically!

31...♗xe2! wins for Black as his king is safe after 32.exf6+ ♔h8 and he has threats like ...♗xh5 and ...♖xg3. If 33.f7 ♖xg3+ 34.♔h2 ♗xh5 35.f8♕+ ♖g8 he remains a piece up.

32.♕f3! All of a sudden Black is lost - thanks to the double attack on f6 - and d3 White wins a piece now.

32...♕e6 32...♗xe2? this time leads to a quick mate 33.♕xf6+ ♔g8 34.♕f8#.

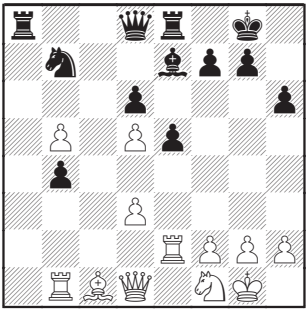
33.♗xd3 ♖xa3 34.♔g2 A clear piece up, White won without trouble.

1-0

This slip was the first warning sign for Anand. The bigger one came in the next round when he had the World Champion on the ropes.

Viswanathan **Anand** - Magnus **Carlsen**

Norway Chess (9.1)



White kept the pressure from the opening, but here Black had a chance to obtain sufficient compensation for the pawn he was going to lose on b4.

22...♕d7? Carlsen misevaluates the position. Now White manages to stabilise the position and keep his dangerous b5-pawn.

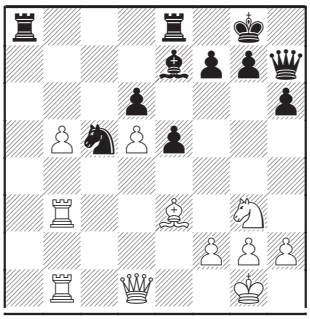
The immediate 22...♘c5 was better. After 23.♖xb4 ♖a1, with ideas like ...♕a5 or ...♕a8, Black is very active on the queenside and this gives him enough compensation to claim equality.

23.♖eb2! ♘c5. 23...♕xb5? 24.♖xb4 loses the knight on b7.

24.♖xb4 ♕f5 Carlsen must have banked on this active move, but Anand returns the pawn and keeps control.

25.♗e3! White is aiming to exchange his bishop for the knight and obtain a good knight vs. bad bishop position.

25...♘xd3 26.♘g3 ♕h7 27.♖4b3 ♘c5



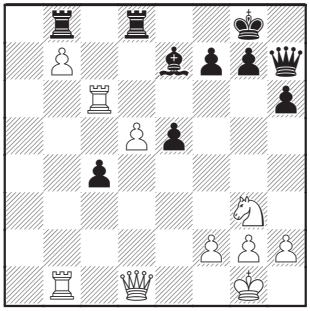
Black has little choice.

Keeping the knight on d3 with 27...e4 only loses a pawn after 28.♘xe4 ♕xe4 29.♖xd3.

28.♗xc5 dxc5 29.b6 The passed pawn on b6, supported by both rooks and the better knight, gives White a decisive advantage.

29...♖ed8 30.b7 ♖ab8 31.♖b6 c4 Black hopes to activate his bishop by ...♗c5 or to use the c-pawn as a distraction.

32.♖c6?!



This was one of the ideas of White's previous move, but, in spite of being a decent option, it is not the best one. Incidentally, it turned out to be the turning point in this game as Anand missed Black's next move and couldn't readjust.

32.♕g4! was best, threatening ♘f5 and ♕xc4. 32...♖xd5 33.♘f5 *(or 33.♕xc4 as in the line after 32.♕a4.)* 33...♗d8 *(or 33...♗g5 34.♕xc4 ♖dd8 35.g4! is a picturesque domination for White - just take a look at that queen on h7!)* 34.♘xh6+ ♔f8 35.♕c8 and White wins; 32.♕a4 ♖xd5 33.♕xc4 was another excellent option, with complete domination. A pretty line is 33...♖c5 34.♖c1!! *(The simple 34.♕b3 is also good enough.)* 34...♖xc4 35.♖xc4 when, thanks to the threat of ♖c8 and the fact that the queen occupies the escape square on h7, White wins.

32...♕d3 Black's best chance.

33.♕f1? This is the move that spoils it for White.

After 33.♕xd3 cxd3 34.♔f1 Anand still would have had great winning chances.

33...♗f8 Now Black is safe. He avoids a check on the eighth rank and wants to eliminate the main danger - the pawn on b7 - by playing ...♖d7.

34.♖xc4 Now the game fizzles out.

34.d6!? was the best chance, though after 34...♗xd6 35.♖d1 ♕g6 he is in no danger of losing.
34...♕xf1+ 35.♔xf1 ♖d7 Black finally eliminates the b7-pawn.

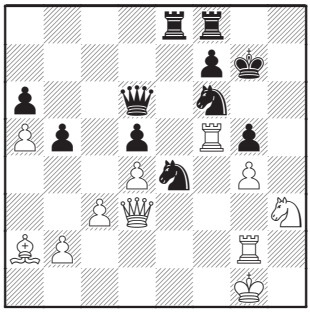
36.♖c8 ♖bxb7 37.♖xb7 ♖xb7 38.♘f5 ♖d7 39.g4 g6 40.♘xh6+ ♔h7

½-½

I am certain that a younger Anand would not have let the World Champion escape with a draw. Still, he kept the pressure and beat Carlsen in the Armageddon in a very uneven game.

Viswanathan Anand - Magnus Carlsen

Norway Chess (10.1)



Needing a draw Carlsen obtained a winning position, though the situation remains tense.

35...♖h8! 36.♘xg5 ♖h4? Missing a surprising tactic.

After 36...♘xg5 37.♖xg5+ ♔f8 Black is winning as all his pieces are better placed than White's.

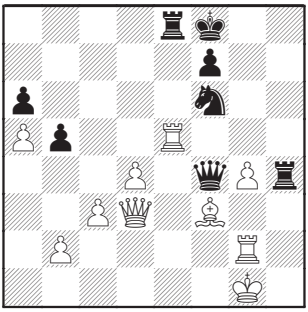
37.♗xd5! A complete turn of the tables, now White is winning.

37...♘xg5 37...♘xd5 38.♘xe4 also wins for White: Black has nothing for the lost pawn.

38.♖xg5+ ♔f8 39.♗f3? Allowing Black back into the game.
39.♕g3! forces the exchange of queens and wraps up the game.

39...♕f4 39...♖e1+ 40.♔f2 ♖hh1 was another good way for Black. After 41.♖f5 ♕e7 Black threatens ...♖hf1, ♕xf1 ♕e3, so White's only move is 42.♖g3 which allows various good options for Black, for example 42...♘e4+ *(or 42...♖hf1+; or 42...♖b1)* 43.♗xe4 ♖xe4

40.♖e5

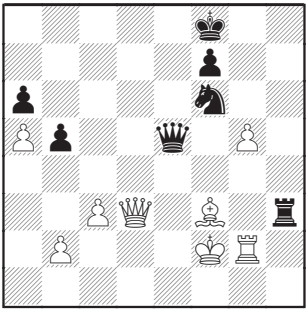


The only way to prevent ...♖e1.

40...♖xe5 41.dxe5 ♕xe5 42.♔f2 Objectively, the position is equal now thanks to Black's activity, but apart from being a pawn up White's position is more compact, which makes it somewhat easier to play.

42...♖h3? 42...♖h1! continuing with active play was best. Black threatens mate on e1. 43.♕d2 ♔g8 emphasises Black's activity as White cannot really untangle.

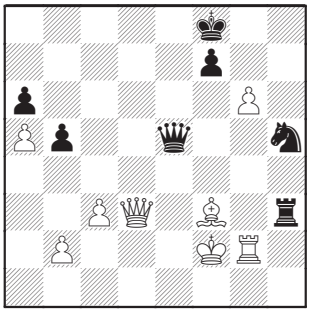
43.g5?!



43.♕d4! would have forced the black queen from the dominating central position. After 43...♕g5 44.♕e3! ♕h4+ 45.♔e2 Black's queen has been stranded while the white king can find safety on the queenside.

43...♘h5? 43...♖h1! was best again. After 44.♕d2 ♘e4+ 45.♗xe4 ♕xe4 Black's active pieces, coupled with White's vulnerable king, should give Black a relatively easy draw.

44.g6!



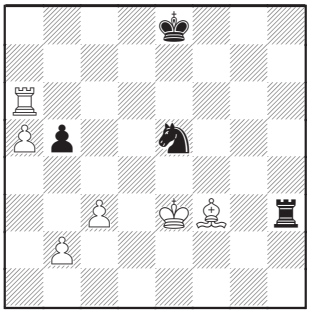
Now White starts his attack.

44...fxg6? Thanks to Black's open king White manages to exchange queens and obtain a winning endgame.

44...♕c5+ was the only way to stay in the game. After 45.♕d4 ♕xd4+ 46.cxd4 ♘f4 47.g7+ ♔g8 48.♖g1 ♘e6 Black keeps certain drawing chances.

45.♕d8+ ♕e8 46.♕xe8+ ♔xe8 47.♖xg6 Black's problem is that his queenside is completely undefended.

47...♘f4 48.♖xa6 ♘d3+ 49.♔e3 ♘e5?



Dropping the knight.

49...♘xb2 50.♖a7! ♘c4+ 51.♔f4 is also winning for White, but obviously a tad more resilient for Black than the game continuation.

50.♖e6+

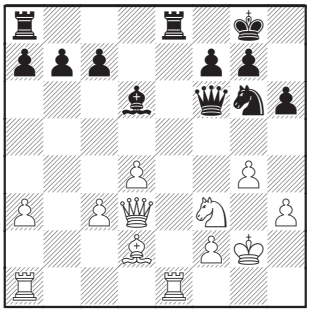
1-0

A small consolation for not winning the classical encounter, but Anand continued with excellent play, drawing with Black (thus winning!) the Armageddon against Giri and winning the Armageddon with White against Radjabov.

It was then, in the penultimate round, that disaster stroke.

Viswanathan Anand – Shakhriyar Mamedyarov

Norway Chess (15.4)



Playing against the Petroff didn't bring anything for Anand and here he is on the wrong side of an equal position. Black's last move, 21...♘g6, created a threat, but one that both players seemed to miss.

22.♕b5?? Upon realising what he had done, Anand immediately resigned.

22.♕b5 The curious thing is that Mamedyarov didn't understand why Anand resigned as he hadn't seen the refutation of the move! Of course, the likelihood of his seeing it was very high, but it would have been interesting to see Anand actually remaining calm and waiting for Mamedyarov to execute 22...♕xf3+! 23.♔xf3 ♘h4#. Who knows, with that winner's luck from the second round still going, he might have got away with it?!

0-1

This was the exact moment when I was reminded of Alekhine's words. With age, the mental stamina that is required to avoid blunders for a duration of a whole event decreases so the likelihood of such horrendous blunders increases. This effectively kills the player's chances of winning a high-level event. It's a pity, as Anand fully deserved to win the tournament with the level of his play, but bearing in mind that this was his second event in a row, after Superbet, perhaps it was too much to expect him to.

In the last round, playing with Black, Anand forced a quick draw against the lowest-rated player Tari and then won the Armageddon game for a finish in clear third.

NORWAY CHESS 2022 - Final Standings		
1	Magnus Carlsen	16½
2	Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	15½
3	Vishy Anand	14½
4	Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	14
5	Wesley So	12½
6	Anish Giri	12
7	Aryan Tari	9½
8	Veeselin Topalov	9½
9	Teymur Rajabov	8
10	Wang Hao	7½

NORWAY CHESS WINNERS		
Year	Classical	Blitz
2013	Sergey Karjakin	Sergey Karjakin
2014	Sergey Karjakin	Magnus Carlsen
2015	Veselin Topalov	Maxime Vachier- Lagrave
2016	Magnus Carlsen	Magnus Carlsen
2017	Levon Aronian	Magnus Carlsen
2018	Fabiano Caruana	Wesley So
2019	Magnus Carlsen	Maxime Vachier- Lagrave
2020	Magnus Carlsen	-
2021	Magnus Carlsen	-
2022	Magnus Carlsen	Wesley So

QUOTES AND QUERIES

HOW PASSENGER TRAINS HELPED BRITISH CHESS FLOURISH

By Alan Smith

6219 The nineteenth century saw increased opportunities for British chess players of the era. This was down to technological and organisational changes. The chief of these was the introduction of passenger trains. The first line to open was between Knott Mill, Manchester and Lime Street, Liverpool. The first regular series of club matches followed a quarter of a century later, contested by Liverpool and Manchester.

Rowland Hill's introduction of the Penny Post in 1840 opened the door for correspondence chess between individual players, hitherto the preserve of the few chess clubs of the day. Here is one of the earliest examples.

Captain James Alexander Robertson - Elijah Williams

Correspondence 1840

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♗c4 ♗b4+ Overambitious; 4...♗c5 and 4...♘f6 are better.

5.c3 dxc3 6.0–0 cxb2 6...c2 7.♕xc2 d6 8.a3 ♗a5 9.b4 ♗b6 10.♕b3 ♕e7 11.♘c3 was a game von der Lasa - von Bilguer.

7.♗xb2 f6 Black had an unenviable choice between this and 7...♗f8**.**

8.e5 fxe5 9.♘xe5 ♘xe5 10.♗xe5 ♘f6 11.♕a4 ♖e7 12.♖e1 ♔f8 Black's extra pawns count for little while his king is exposed and his pieces out of play. White makes good use of his lead in development to win handily.

13.♘c3 d6 14.♗g3 g6 15.♗h4! ♕d7 16.♕c2 b5 17.♗b3 c6 18.♖e3 d5 19.♖ae1 ♘xe4 20.♗xe7+ ♕xe7 21.♘xe4 dxe4 22.♖xe4 ♕f6 23.♕c5+ ♔g7 24.♖e7+ ♔h6 25.♖xd7 ♖he8 26.♖e3

1–0

Bell's Life in London, 11th 0ctober 1840

New ideas in the opening changed the very character of the game. Chief of these was Captain Evans' gambit, 'a gift of the gods to a languishing chess world'. Later on Horatio Caro and Marcus Kann analysed and played the defence named after them. The Caro-Kann can also arise from different move orders: eg, 1.d4 nf6 2.c4 c5 3.e3 cxd4 4.exd4 d5 is a Panov Attack.

Munchoff - Horatio Caro

Cafe Royal, Berlin 1886

1.e4 c6 2.♘c3 d5 3.exd5?! Already a positional error. 3.d4 and 3.♘f3 are much better.

3...cxd5 4.d4 ♗f5 Black has no problems after this.

5.♗b5+ ♘c6 6.♗e3 e6 7.♘f3 ♗d6 8.0–0 ♘f6 9.♖e1 0–0 10.♘h4? White's attempt to harass the bishop allows a combination.

10...♗xh2+! 11.♔xh2 ♘g4+ 12.Kg3 ♘xe3 13.♕h5 13.♖xe3 ♕g5+ picks up the loose knight.

13...♗g6! 14.♘xg6 fxg6 15.♕h1 15.♕f3 ♘xd4.

15...♕g5+ 16.♔h2 ♕xh4+ 17.♔g1 ♕xf2+ 18.♔h2 ♖f4

0–1

Bruderschaft, 20th November 1886

The defence 1.e4 ♘f6 2.e5 ♘d5 may seem to belong in the 20th century, but the accepted continuation 3.d4 d6 was played by John Edmund Hall in the final of the Yorkshire championship 1893, which he won.

Chess columns began in the pages of the *Liverpool Mercury* in 1819. This featured a series of unattributed problems, probably taken from the works of Stamma. The first column in a national paper was a short-lived one in the *Observer* from October 1836 to March 1837. No columnist is named, but it was likely to have been George Walker: there is a certain similarity in style with his writing in *Bell's Life in London*. The first column in the modern style was that conducted by Howard Staunton in the *Illustrated London News*. Each week he annotated games, gave news and a problem, as well as answering queries, not always in a patient fashion. Later on Lowenthal in the *Era*, Williams in the *Field* and Wisker in *Land and Water* all conducted eminently readable columns in their own style.

Chess organisations in Great Britain ran a chequered course. The Northern and Midland Counties Chess Association gradually enlarged until it became the British Chess Association, which ran four British Championship events 1866 to 1872, as well as a master event in 1872, won by Steinitz two points ahead of Blackburne. After that, the association stalled.

The BCA was reconstituted in 1884 and was an immediate success thanks to the energetic efforts of secretary Leopold Hoffer and the patronage of newspaper magnate Sir George Newnes. The seven events of the Association saw the rise to fame of Gunsberg, Tarrasch and Lasker. Like its predecessor, the Association fell apart. The chief problem was that both versions of the BCA were top-down organisations, with little regard for, or input from, the grass roots. This problem was only addressed in the twentieth century with the dawn of the British Chess Federation.

The following game is a good illustration of black's problems defending against the Evans Gambit.

Francis **Burden** - Edward **Lowe**

Divan 1862

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.b4 ♗xb4 5.c3 ♗c5 6.d4 exd4 7.0–0 d6 8.cxd4 ♗b6 9.h3 This was soon superseded by 9.♘c3, 9.♗b2 and 9.d5, but made a dramatic comeback in the game Mariotti - Gligoric Venice 1971**.**

9...♘f6 10.♘c3 0–0 Improving on 10...h6 11.e5 dxe5 12.♗a3 e4 13.♕b3 ♗e6 14.d5 ♘a5 15.dxe6! ♘xb3 16.exf7+ Burden - Hannah London 1860.

11.♗g5 ♘e7 12.e5! dxe5 13.dxe5 ♘d7 Exchanging queens loses a piece.

14.♘d5 ♗c5 15.♖e1 c6 16.♘xe7+ ♗xe7 17.♗xe7 ♕xe7 18.e6 fxe6 19.♖xe6 ♕b4 20.♕d3 ♘b6 21.♘g5 g6 22.♖xg6+ 22...♔h8 23.♕d4+ and mate next move.

1–0

Sporting Gazette, 29th November 1862

CHESS PLAYERS WHO BECAME 'DISAPPEARED'

THE MEMORY IMPERATIVE

A Review of: 'The Lubyanka Gambit' by Sergei Grodzensky; 'Hero of the Pre-War Olympiads, Grandmaster Vladimirs Petrovs' by Dmitry Kryavkin and Galina Petrova-Matisa; 'Petr Izmailov, From Chess Champion of Russia to Enemy of the People, The Truth About My Father' by Nikolai Izmailov: all published by Elk and Ruby, 2021

By Alan Smith

For some time now, Elk and Ruby has been performing an exceptionally valuable service to us all. By 'us' I mean people everywhere, not simply chess players. And by 'service' I mean the meticulous search for accuracy in describing, to the best extent possible (however imperfect that may be), what happened to a particular subset of the numerically enormous set of people who became 'disappeared' (to use the verb and verb tense rendered infamous by events in certain Latin American countries some decades ago) under Bolshevism. This subset was united for the most part (Solzhenitsyn was more of an exception) by splendid skills in many facets of chess. They were also united in a far more sinister fashion through becoming victims of that deadly disease 'Soviet Suspicion'.

On the citations page of his superb volume, Sergei Grodzensky offers two quotes that need to be repeated. From Anna Akhmatova's 'Requiem' we have:

'I would like to name everyone by name

But they took away the list and there is no way to find them out'

Many decades later, during the Glasnost initiated by Mikhail Gorbachev, the outstanding organisation 'Memorial' was established. In its Manifesto we find a clarion call to Memory:

'We need to know how this happened

So that no one can ever steal our future again

The study of the past is the solution of the future, its guarantee'.

Grodzensky's work was originally published in Russian in 2004, almost 20 years ago. It was the product of years of effort, a substantial part of which necessarily involved what might be called 'historical groping'. On several occasions, Grodzensky indicates that a relative of the deceased had seen an article written by the author, and subsequently sent him information or met him to pass on hitherto unpublicised details. At times, chance encounters enlightened the path of research. And then there are lucky coincidences - Solzhenitsyn was one of the author's school teachers, the author's father was a close friend of Shalamov, and so Grodzensky encounters the authors of the two great books in Russian about the Gulags. Since the pair had sharply contrasting views about chess, the personal connection makes for absorbing reading.

Let me start comments on 'The Lubyanka Gambit' by highlighting that the magnetic title in fact sells the book short. Why? Because it suggests that all of the people described were locked up in what was perhaps the 20th century's most recognisable prison, and met their fates in its lower levels. Reality was, alas, worse. The six composers of chess studies and problems, the five over the board players, the three 'servants of the Revolution' who subsequently joined

Petr Izmailov

its victims, along with the five people who were in the Gulags, all finished up in very different places and at very different times. The book tells their stories, one by one, at the same time as it provides rich evidence of the exceptional chess skills of more or less all of them (save Solzhenitsyn, since he remained sceptical about the game). And the emphasis on each allows us to trace similarities and draw lessons.

The essential similarity is that they all became 'citizens under suspicion'. In most instances the cloud descended very suddenly. Even the proverbial 'here today, gone tomorrow' fails to reflect the exceptional speed with which victims were 'disappeared'. Take the case of Petr Izmailov, who was indeed the First Chess champion of Soviet Russia: 'On September 10 1936, Petr Nikolaevich called his wife in the afternoon from work and told her not to worry, he said he would come later than usual, since he had been invited for a discussion at the local NKVD office. This was their last conversation - he would never see freedom again (p.197)'. The second similarity is that the majority were accused of being linked with some (imaginary) group which in some way was alleged to be plotting against the State. They were therefore charged under the ubiquitous Article 58, the various clauses of which covered just about anything that might be vaguely labelled 'suspicious'. Georgy Schneideman, for instance, just had the wrong surname. Others lived, or had been living, in places where the secret police reckoned that anti- Soviet elements were prevalent. So such people too were swept away.

A third strand of similarity is that most people were rehabilitated decades later, often posthumously. The documents stating rehabilitation generally cited the grounds for this decision as being 'lack of evidence'. This is no surprise. If I am suspicious of you, I do not need to produce anything to justify my suspicions. And if 'I' happens to be the Supreme Leader, then it's all over before it started. There is nothing you can do. What comes through is that characteristic of most totalitarian States, namely formalism of the law. The State produces laws that will allow it to justify what it wishes to do, and can thus assert that all actions taken were in conformity with the law.

Now to the fourth similarity, the one of most interest to chess players. The level of artistic achievement by the figures in the book was in many instances very high. Some examples demonstrate the point. The Latvian Grandmaster Vladimirs Petrovs has to be considered as one of the world's very best players during the 1930s. The book devoted to him shows this in great detail. His results bear comparison with those of any international player in that period. The fact that he could play in most of the world's leading chess events is because he was Latvian, and thus not operating under the rigidities of the Soviet system. But in 1940 he became a Soviet citizen. When Nazi Germany invaded his home country he had been playing in the semi-finals of the Soviet championship at Rostov-on-Don. Unable to return to Latvia, where his wife and two-year old daughter were, he was moved around over the next 12 months performing several functions for the Soviet government. He played in a tournament

at Sverdlovsk in 1942, went to Kazan for another engagement - and disappeared completely. Not till July 1989, more than four decades later, did his widow receive a death certificate saying that Petrovs had died of illnesses in August 1943. She also received a KGB document rehabilitating Vladimirs Mikhailovich from an accusation that he had engaged in 'anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda'.

Many of the people were more study composers and problemists than actual players, though most seemed to be good at everything. I personally have always taken a deep interest in studies, so I was struck by the chapter on that brilliant composer Sergei Kaminer (who as an adolescent player had several times beaten the three years younger Botvinnik). Kaminer in fact sought to challenge the studies philosophy of the famous French composer Henri Rinck. On page 109, Grodzensky sets out the seven directions in which Kaminer strived to take study composition away from what he considered to be the mechanical approach prevailing internationally. Those directions included conversions of pawns into minor pieces; fusing ideas from problem construction into studies; refocusing on the geometry of the board; and elaborating on the theme of positional draws. Kaminer was executed in 1938 when he was just 30 years old. It seems he had premonitions that the massive Stalin scourge of that period would take down managers like himself. In the autumn of the previous year he had visited Botvinnik in Moscow and gave him the notebooks containing all his notes and work in progress. Kaminer apparently told Botvinnik that he should keep them lest something happened. He was rehabilitated in 1956.

Not all of the figures described in the books came under suspicion in the Stalinist period and not all were killed. The striking case is Nathan Sharansky. He is internationally known for his efforts to ensure that the Helsinki

Vladimir Petrovs

Accords of 1975, in which Human Rights were at the centre of negotiations, were actually implemented in the USSR. Of course they were not, and those like Sharansky suffered for their efforts. He eventually managed to emigrate to Israel and indeed became a Minister in one of the Governments. As a chess player, he too was strong. Grodzensky gives two of his games, from 1994 and 1996, where he played in simultaneous exhibitions against Kasparov. Sharansky drew the first and won the second.

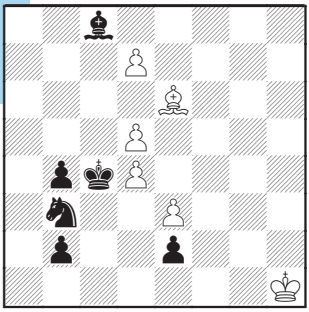
The ferocity of assaults on minds and souls, on creativity and personal expression, should never be underestimated. The outstanding American historian of Europe. Timothy Snyder, opened his epic history 'Bloodlands', in which he spares no detail in showing how Poland and the Ukraine, countries in the eye of today's storm, by telling us that it matters to track down exactly what happened to each and every life, for all humans are unique. The authors of these three gripping books have sought to follow that maxim for a group of highly talented people whose skills encompassed various facets of chess. They and the publishers have given us a forceful reminder of why we can never forget the lesson. Memory is crucial.

PROBLEM WORLD

by Christopher Jones
cjajones1@yahoo.co.uk
Grandmaster of Chess Composition

Solutions are given on page 638

1

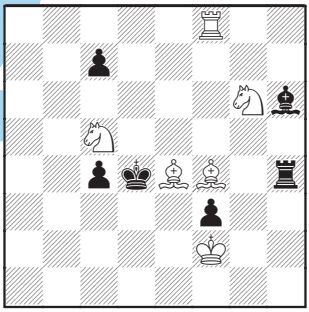


Jozef Lozek and Miroslav Svitek (Slovakia / Czechia)

Helpmate in 2 (b)Kc4>h8

ORIGINAL

2

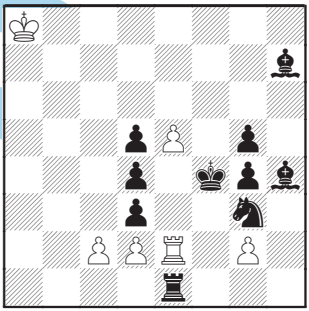


Christer Jonsson and Jorge Kapros (Sweden / Argentina)

Helpmate in 2 - 2 solutions

ORIGINAL

3

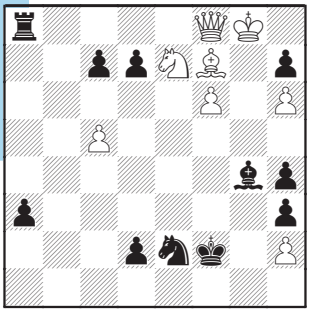


Christopher Jones (Bristol)

Helpmate in 3 (b)Pd4>f5

ORIGINAL

4



Abdelaziz Onkoud (France)

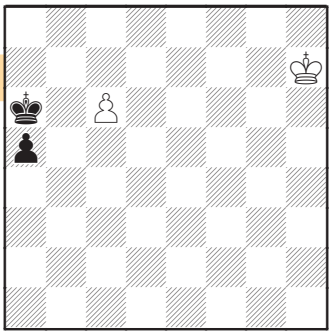
Helpmate in 3 - 2 solutions

ORIGINAL

Endgame Studies

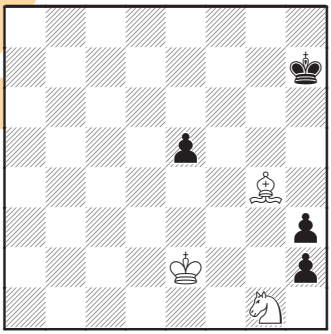
by Ian Watson
ian@irwatson.uk

1



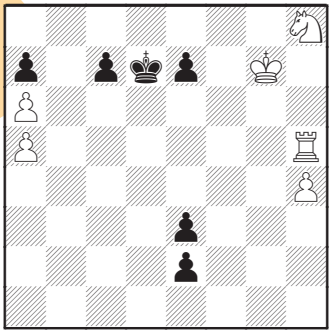
H A Adamson
The Chess Amateur 1922
DRAW

2



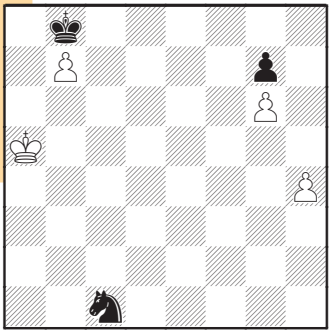
C M Bent
Schakend Nederland 1976
DRAW

3



H M Lommer
New Statesman 1954
WIN

4



J S Speelman
EG 1978
WIN

'Endgame Wizardry' is the title of a new book that celebrates the best British endgame studies. The author is John Beasley; John is the GOM, the Grand Old Man, of the British endgame study. He wrote and published the magazine British Endgame Study News from 1996 to 2010. Together with Timothy Whitworth he wrote *Endgame Magic*, one of the major British books about endgame studies. Beasley was also my predecessor as the BCM study columnist. All our studies this month are taken from the book, and I've chosen four from the twentieth century that show the range of styles of British composers.

The Adamson study is now in its centenary year. John writes that "Adamson's version of the Reti study" - the most famous one-against-one pawn study - "is perhaps even more impressive because the Black pawn is not only well out of reach of the White king vertically, it is also far away on the opposite side of the board."

John comments about the composer of the second study, "Mike Bent has been by far Britain's most prolific endgame study composer, and his recipe was very simple: he aimed to entertain. There was no deep theory here, and certainly no difficulty for its own sake; just a sudden surprising move or two, and the reader or solver was left with a smile on his face."

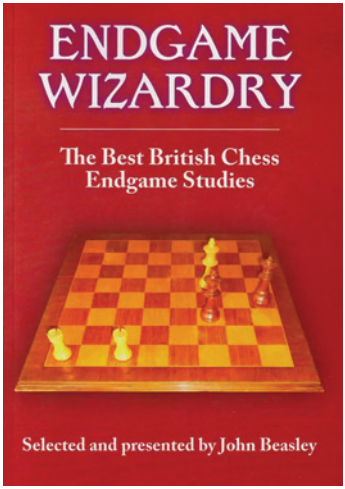
On the third, "Harold Lommer was a major figure in endgame study chess. He produced two standard collections, *1,234 Modern End-game Studies* with M A Sutherland and *1,357 End-game Studies*, and his dictum 'a good study should warm the heart' has never been bettered."

The modern era has seen a great increase in the complexity of endgame studies. The fourth study, composed by Jonathan Speelman in his youth, shows how good composers can combine complexity with charm. John Beasley writes of the final position of this study, "A spectacular position validated by some very fine analysis." and "done before the computer became able to help." Of course, Jon Speelman has a computer-like ability to calculate, which enabled him as a player to achieve a ranking of fourth in the world and to compete in two Candidates tournaments.

Are the hundred studies in this book the "cream of British endgame study composition"? We all have slightly different tastes, but John's selection would not differ greatly from mine, and perhaps not from yours. They are also well presented; not only the start position but additional diagrams to show how the play progresses. At the back, there are entrancing anecdotes about the composers; John is also a precise but readable historian of the endgame study.

John's magazine BESN similarly contained such titbits to add spice to the studies. All the issues of British Endgame Study News can be found at www.jsbeasley.co.uk, where there are also entertaining articles about endgame studies, and indeed many other types of game and puzzle.

The book *Endgame Wizardry* was published this year by the author. It has 159 pages. It's available from chess.co.uk for £9.95 plus shipping.



The solutions to the four studies are on page 639.

Openings
for Amateurs

CLASSICAL vs. HYPERMODERN

By Pete Tamburro; ptamburro@aol.com

There was quite a revolution in chess in the 1920s as classical chess was being challenged by hypermodern upstarts such as Nimzowitsch and Reti.

The classical school was relatively easy to understand: get your e- or d-pawn out two squares, develop your pieces on active squares, gain space and, once you have completed those efforts and have an advantage, you commence your attack. It could be an attack on a castled king or a positional advantage that led to an outside pawn majority or seizure of the 7th rank with rooks. It was fairly straightforward. Then the hypermoderns came along and seemingly conceded the centre, but then used wing attacks to strike their opponent's approved classical formation. Lots of fianchetto formations appeared, sometimes on both sides of the board. One of those "both sides of the board" players was Réti, whom people started to take very seriously when he knocked off Alekhine, Bogoljubov and Capablanca, among others.

My first tournament book was New York, 1924, where the old school met the new school in one of the great tournaments of all time. It was in that book that one game, apart from the brilliancies of Bogoljubov and Marshall. gave me a lot to think about in terms of whether my chess play should go toward the classical school or the hypermodern school. I ended up trying both. I was definitely classical as White and mixed up the back side into classical against 1.e4 and hypermodern versus 1.d4 or 1.c4.

This month's game went a long way in helping me decide because, looking at the position after move 9 and a Lasker game in the same tournament, I came to the conclusion that it wasn't some special series of moves or a particular formation that brought success. It was a combination of the understanding of the fundamental demands of a particular position and the tactical awareness and timing of key moves. You couldn't ask for two better representatives of each school than Réti and Yates.

Yates, the classical player par excellence, and Réti, the double fianchetto radical, were matched in this contest in a struggle that helped define for a young player what was required for getting good at chess and what this clash of theories was all about. Alekhine's notes were very helpful. If you haven't already done so, and you're a player who really wants to head toward mastership, going through every game in New York 1924 will be a huge step forward for you. Later, you might try Zurich, 1953 or a more modern tournament book like San Luis 2005 or Tata Steel 2021. For those early on in their advanced chess development, it would be a good idea to start with the early tournaments to see how chess ideas developed. In fact, if you can get a hold of Hastings 1895, annotated by Colin Crouch and Kean Haines, you will have a masterpiece of explanation of what was going on back then. For now, we're going back to 1924.

Richard **Réti** – Fred **Yates [A13]**

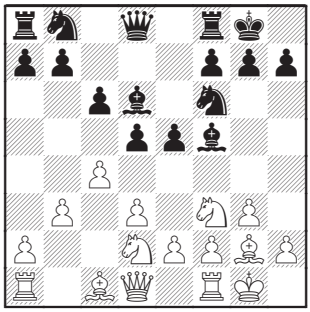
New York New York, 1924

1.♘f3 d5 You can't get much more classical than that; however, only about a third of Black's replies in chess history since then have answered with the d-pawn coming out two squares. It's a perfectly fine move, but Réti was on a mission to sow doubt in the Black side's mind.

2.c4 e6 Already we had a comment from Alekhine: 'This defence to the new opening (also employed in the game, Réti vs. Ed. Lasker, Réti vs. Bogoljuvow, Alekhine vs. Bogoljubow and, with colours transposed, Marshall vs. Capablanca) failed to stand the test, which is not to be wondered at, in as much as the QB is thereby imprisoned from the start. On the other hand, the London system (Alekhine vs. Euwe and Capablanca vs. Réti, London, 1922) essayed by Dr. Lasker against Réti, seems to insure equality for Black.' Wow, really!? You fail with e6 and equalise with c6? A bit over the top, perhaps? In his notes on the aforementioned Lasker game, Alekhine points out that Réti's ♘f3 and c4 sequence had 'the merit of manoeuvring Black into a variation of the Queen's Gambit hitherto not considered as fully satisfactory.' So, they didn't want to play c6 because the opinion on the Slav was negative. Back to square one! Now today all sorts of moves are played without those criticisms.

There is 2...d4 which was frowned upon at one time because of 3.b4 but it turned out that just about anything worked: 3...f6 *(3...g6; 3...c5; 3...♗g4)*;

Of course, the Slav with 2...c6 gained in respectability. What I started to realise was that Alekhine was trying to assert certain principles to make sense of the "new opening". We need to jump to the Réti-Lasker game where c6 was played: 3.b3 ♗f5 4.g3 ♘f6 5.♗g2 e6 6.0-0 ♗d6 7.d3 0-0 8.♘bd2 e5.



As Alekhine did, compare this diagram with the diagram after move nine in this game. Alekhine notes the better-placed bishop on f5 and the complete equality of Black. Was it that simple?

3.g3 ♘f6 4.♗g2 With 4.d4 you can get into Catalan positions, but Réti seems almost "ideological" in his passion not to play d4!

4...♗d6 Again, there were a host of playable moves here, but Yates' choice was interesting because he wanted to get e5 in to attain a classical opening position. This becomes a very interesting point later on. Very solid was 4...♗e7.

5.b3 Here we go! Réti wasn't trying to gain some opening advantage or even a slight initiative from the get-go. He was setting up a *tabiya* that he felt comfortable with.
There was still the double-step with the d-pawn available. Some possibilities: 5.d4 c6 *(5...0-0 6.0-0 c5 7.cxd5 exd5 8.♗e3 cxd4 9.♗xd4 ♘c6 10.♘c3 ♘xd4 11.♘xd4=)* 6.0-0 0-0 7.b3 ♖e8 8.♗b2 ♘bd7 9.♘c3 e5?? 10.cxd5 cxd5 11.dxe5 ♘xe5 12.♘xd5±.

5...0-0 6.0-0 Or 6.♗b2 Both sides are heading for their *tabiya*.

6...♖e8 In keeping with the idea of supporting the e5 move.

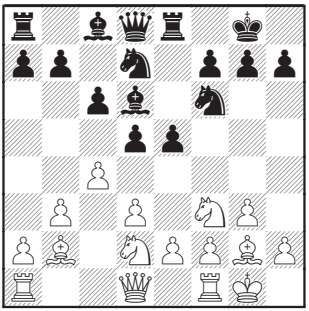
7.♗b2 ♘bd7 All sorts of complicated lines result from 7...e5, so Yates, being a less

rash player, didn't go this possible route: 8.cxd5 ♘xd5 9.e4!? *(Also possible was 9.d4 e4 10.♘e5)* 9...♘b4 *(White might try a pawn sac if 9...♘f6 10.d4 exd4 11.e5 ♗xe5 12.♘xe5 ♖xe5 13.♕xd4 ♖e8 14.♕xd8 ♖xd8 15.♗xf6 gxf6 16.♘c3)* 10.d4 ♗g4 11.d5 c6 12.a3 cxd5 *(12...♘4a6 13.♘c3)* 13.exd5 e4 14.axb4 exf3 15.♗xf3 ♗xf3 16.♕xf3 ♘d7 17.♖d1± What's the lesson from all this? The tactical possibilities for both sides dictated possible courses of events. It was not just classical vs. hypermodern. It was also player temperament and positional judgment. After 17.♖d1 in the possible variation, what's your judgment on the passed d5 pawn? Will it be blocked or will White successfully increase the pressure on the blockers?

8.d3 Alekhine was critical of this move because it 'unnecessarily allows the move, e5, with the subsequent development of the QB, thus removing the main disadvantage of Black's position.' So, here we have a legitimate question: What exactly is the point of White's opening plan? Is e5 the focal point to control or attack once Black goes there? Réti clearly is opting for the latter, while Alekhine supports getting d4 in sooner.

8...c6 9.♘bd2 It was still possible to play 9.d4 ♕e7 10.♘c3 , but the advantage, if any, is microscopic, and Réti is still holding the move back. What we see is Réti playing out his philosophy until he feels the right moment has arrived.

9...e5!

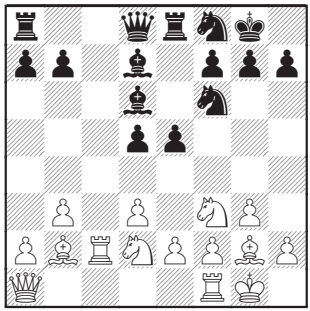


Alekhine is happy for Yates because the QB is no longer trapped by e6. So, if White had nothing more than equality by playing d4 earlier in this sequence, then e6 wasn't so bad after all, since Yates got to play e5 anyhow. Look at the diagram, though. Both sides are content with their positions. Yates has a classical setup and Réti has his hypermodern array. Nothing has been decided yet. The first nine moves have not decided anything but player preferences. The game is won because one player needed to grasp the demands of some of the following positions - both strategically and tactically.

10.cxd5 cxd5 11.♖c1 Réti is about to become 'very Réti', with his rook move, the main point of which, oddly enough, is not to control the c-file. No, that would be too simple. What if White had played 11.e4? Then Black could play 11...♘c5 *(because if 11...d4 12.♘c4. The position reveals then that the knight on d7 has a possible use on c5 and the possibility of playing d4 in responding to e4 is met by ♘c5. Yates needed to keep the knight on d7 for a moment and take away the ♘c4 possibility if he wanted to play d4.)*

11...♘f8?! What he needed to play was 11... b5! because if 12.e4 *(or 12.♖c2 ♗b7 13.a4 b4 14.e4 dxe4 15.dxe4 ♘c5 16.♘c4 ♗f8∓)* 12...d4 13.♘xd4 exd4 14.e5 ♘xe5 15.♗xa8 ♘xd3 16.♗xd4 *(16.♖c2 ♗f5)* 16...♘xc1∓ Instead, he set upon a ponderous plan that took his knight away from the centre.

12.♖c2 ♗d7 13.♕a1



And now we have the culmination of Réti's three-move plan. I distinctly remember standing at Bent Larsen's game back in a US tournament in the 70s and seeing this ♕a1 idea played by him. 'Boy is he avant garde!'. Yet, the pressure on e5 presents Black with a decision because while the direct threat is on e5, f6 and g7 are also indirectly threatened.

13...♘g6 That ♕a1 move prevented 13...e4 14.dxe4 dxe4 15.♘g5 ♗c6 16.♗xf6 ♕xf6 17.♕xf6 gxf6 18.♘gxe4 and Black is lost.

14.♖fc1 ♗c6 15.♘f1 White gets no advantage from 15.e4 dxe4 16.dxe4 ♗c7=.

15...♕d7 Alekhine thought it was better to play 15...♕e7 16.♘e3 ♗d7

16.♘e3 h6?

Alekhine called this 'the decisive blunder'. A bit harsh, but it was not a good move. He had better in 16...d4! 17.♘c4 ♗c7 18.a4 ♘d5 19.e3 ♘b4 20.♖d2 dxe3 *(20...♕g4 21.♘e1 ♗xg2 22.♘xg2 ♖ad8)* 21.fxe3 ♖ad8;

or even 16...♘g4;

or 16...h5. However, with the h6 move, White only has one move that prevents Black from equalising.

17.d4!! Forced, yet the culmination of Réti's plan. He picks the right (and perhaps last) moment to get d4 in. It is, after all, the true hypermodern attack on the pawn on e5. Pawn, knight, and the queen and bishop battery hit e5. He got to play it because Black needed to be a little more active in his recent moves. The plan needed cooperation by the second player.

17...e4 If 17...♕e6 18.dxe5 ♗xe5 19.♘d4 Threatening the Réti-Spielmann game weakness on c6 that we covered in an earlier column and is in my book, Openings for Amateurs--Next Steps. 19...♗xd4 20.♗xd4 ♘e5 and Black has conceded both d4 and the isolated pawn on d5. Black still could make a fight of it for a lot longer than the game lasted.

18.♘e5 ♗xe5 Else ♘xc6.

19.dxe5 ♘h7 20.f4 'The control of the black squares and the weakness of the hostile d-pawn are now decisive factors in favour of White.' (Alekhine) 20.f3 was also possible.

20...exf3 21.exf3 Please note the continued indirect pressure on g7. The long-ranging influence is quite instructive.

21...♘g5 22.f4 ♘h3+ 23.♔h1 d4 24.♗xd4 ♖ad8 #

Of no help is 24...♗xg2+ 25.♔xg2 ♘gxf4+ 26.gxf4 ♘xf4+ 27.♔h1±.

25.♖xc6! A nice final flourish by Réti. Taking with the bishop worked, too.

25...bxc6 26.♗xc6 ♘f2+ 27.♔g2 ♕xd4 28.♕xd4 ♖xd4 29.♗xe8 ♘e4 30.e6 ♖d2+ 31.♔f3 Black resigned. He had gone this far, so he might as well have played:

31...f5 threatening mate, which, of course, is easily met.

1-0

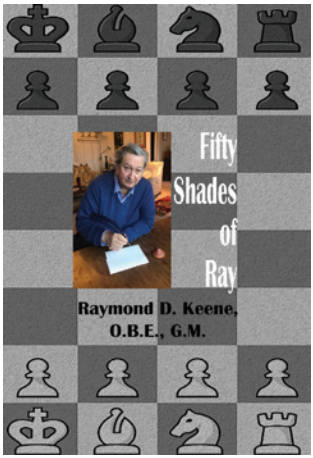
The valuable lesson from this game is that hypermodernism doesn't win in and of itself. Nor does classicism win by itself. What both opening philosophies give a player is a framework within which to operate.

However, chess skills like fighting for central square control, making preventative moves, and keeping your pieces active and being aware of tactical possibilities are valid concerns in every chess game you play. The other mentioned game Réti-Emanuel Lasker exemplifies all of this. Alekhine mentions in his notes to the Lasker game that Réti went ahead with his plan, just as inthe Yates game, with some confidence in its validity. Both Réti and Lasker made mistakes. Réti lost. He didn't lose because of his plan. He lost because there is a lot more to chess than just the opening moves.

I asked Australian GM Max Illingworth about his recommendation that players try the Réti. He offered this practical advice: 'In my experience, most players below 2400ish don't really handle the Réti well as Black, which means that White can get a nice advantage often in practice if they know a few subtleties.'

I'm sure his chess students will be taught those subtleties and I'm sure they'll be about understanding the evolving position and not just memorising.

Hardinge Simpole



is delighted to announce
the publication of

Fifty Shades of Ray

Chess in the year of the Coronavirus Pandemic

Raymond D. Keene

With an Introduction by CJ de Mooi

OBITUARY

Croatia's **Mišo Cebalo** (*Zagreb* 6 ii 1945 - *Zagreb* 2 ix 2022). International Master (1978), International Grandmaster (1985). He won the World Seniors Championship (2009); FIDE Senior Trainer (2011).

1980: 1st= Yugoslav Championship. 1985: 6th= Taxco Interzonal though he did not trouble the qualifiers.

He played for Croatia in two chess Olympiads: on 1st board at Manila, 1992 and at 4th board at Moscow, 1994. Gifted linguist. As white he employed the English and as black was at home in many Sicilian set-ups. He had not played seriously for several years.

Psychologist and Former Chairman USSR Chess Federation, **Nikolai Vladimirovich Krogius** (*Saratov* 22 vii 1930 - *New York* 14 vii 2022), International Master (1963), Grandmaster (1964), Joint Winner FIDE Seniors (1993). Winner: Varna 1960, Sochi 1967 and Varna 1969. Arbiter, author, Krogius helped Spassky prepare in Boris's World Championship matches in 1969 and 1972. Not hugely popular with his peers, his move to the USA did nothing to silence his critics.

SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS

A helpful set of problems

This month the column is devoted to ***helpmates***. This genre divides opinion among chess players. As its essence is that White and Black collaborate to achieve a shared goal (the checkmate of Black) it is the polar opposite of what happens in the adversarial cut and thrust of competitive play. On the other hand, many players enjoy taking a break from the rigours of match play and letting the imagination roam freely. You can make a case for the value of this exercise of the imagination (and increasing recognition of recurring patterns) for enhancing playing strength. When (until quite recently) I played League chess I liked to tell myself this, though I did make it my practice never to indulge in helpmates on the same day as playing a match!

If you're unfamiliar with helpmates, then all you need to know is that Black initiates a sequence of moves (to which the normal rules of chess apply) and does all that he can to facilitate his being mated. Our first problem (welcome to Miroslav Svitek, a composer new to this column!) is in two moves, so we look for a BWBW# sequence of moves; then, when the black king is moved to h8, there is a new BWBW# sequence. There should always be a connecting thread between the play in the two solutions, and that is very apparent in this case - in (a), the solution runs (with, remember, Black playing first) 1.e1=♗ dxc8=♗ 2.♗c3 ♗a6#; and then in (b) we have 1.b1=♗ d8=♗ 2.♗h7 ♗f6#. As you'll see, there's a move-by-move correlation between the solutions.

In the second helpmate, White has quite a strong force, but the difficulty is in marshalling it within the very limited number of moves stipulated. It turns out that to complement the two moves by which White sets up the mate Black's contribution must be to block one of his king's potential flight squares, and that to do this he must, in both solutions, capture on each move a white officer that turns out not to be positively required in this solution. Note, however, that all of the white pieces captured (the two bishops in one case, the two knights in the other) contribute positively to the mate in the solution in which they are not captured. This paradox - indispensable for one mate, entirely dispensable for the other - is the sort of thing that helpmate enthusiasts like. The solutions run 1.♖xf4 ♘a4 2.♖xe4 ♖d8# and 1.♗xf8 ♔xf3 2.♗xc5 ♗e5#.

Three-move helpmates tend to be harder to solve. In the first of our three-movers, it is very unlikely that the black rook at d1 is there for decoration, or even so as to prevent unwanted mating positions. It is much more likely that it has a positive function. The nub of the problem is for the white rook, whose mobility is impaired, to enable the black rook to get into the play. The first solution is the more paradoxical. In order to enable the white rook to get out of the way (without giving a check from f2, which would stymie all possible three-move mating plans) Black has to spend two of his three moves sacrificing his h7 bishop to make the square g2 available - thus, 1.♗e4 cxd3 2.♗xg2 ♖xg2 3.♖xe5 ♖f2#. It seems a bit niggardly to show only one solution from this matrix, but the (b) solution (when the d4 pawn is shifted to f5) is slightly more prosaic. It does, however, remain the case that Black has to expend his first two moves sacrificing his bishop to enable the white rook to get to the square it needs to reach, in this case e6: 1.♗g8 e6 2.♗xe6 ♖xe6 3.♖e3 dxe3#.

Finally, a fine construction from Abdelaziz. There is in fact a connection with the preceding problem - again, Black must spend his first two moves moving one of his pieces (this time a rook) which is sacrificed on a square occupied by a white pawn, so that one of the white pieces (this time the queen) can land on that square on move two. In this case, there is a stronger correlation between the two solutions. Note the reciprocally changed functions of the white bishop and white knight, very cleverly accentuated by the fact that they both arrive at g6 on move one and on d5 on the mating move. In perfectly matching solutions (with a good pair of black king moves on move three) the white queen, perhaps surprisingly, plays only a supporting role in the two solutions - 1.♖a6 ♗g6 2.♖xf6 ♕xf6+ 3.♔e3 ♘d5# and 1.♖a5 ♘g6 2.♖xc5 ♕xc5+ 3.♔f3 ♗d5#.

SOLUTIONS TO ENDGAMES (See page 630)

Adamson

1.♔g6 a4 2.♔f5 ♔b6 3.♔e5 ♔xc6 4.♔d4 or **3...a3 4.♔d6** draws.

This was published in the same year as Reti's classic, and although it appeared in print first, was derived from the Reti.

Bent

1.♔f1 h1♕ 2.♗f3 ♕h2 3.♗e4+ ♔~ 4.♘e2 and Black's "king cannot get in, his queen cannot get out, and White's king will mark time on e1 and f1."

Lommer

1.♖d5+ ♔e6 2.♘g6 ♔xd5 3.♘f4+ and the pawn is caught. Alternatively, **1...♔c6 2.♘g6 ♔xd5 3.♘f4+** or **1...♔e8 2.♘f7 e6 3.♖d8+ ♔e7 4.♘e5** ♔xd8 5.♘f3 or **1...♔c8 2.♘f7 c6 3.♖d8+ ♔c7 4.♘g5.** "f4, e7, c6, e6: the same mate has been threatened from four different squares."

Speelman

1.h5 ♘b3+ 2.♔b6 ♘d4 3.h6 ♘e6 4.h7 ♘f8 5.h8♗ ("Who said that such a position could not occur in play?") **5...♘e6 6.♔c6 ♘d4+ 7.♔c5 ♘e6+ 8.♔b6** and wins. There are other interesting lines, such as after 1...♘d3 and after 5...♘d7+, which you can find diagrammed and fully explained in the book.

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